

My Army Days

By

Paul M. Gerrish

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Forward

This book, written by my father was found in his writing after he passed away. I had heard a few of the incidents cited in his work when he was older but didn't know his full story. After having done considerable research on both my family genealogy and work with a local museum, I found how valuable this type of work could be

I found photos that he had either saved or sent to his mother or grandmother throughout his Army days which I have added to enhance the story.

One of my pet peeves when doing any research was the lack of an index so I added one here which includes names and places in the hopes that some of the descendants of those with whom he served who wish to do research may find this work useful.

He didn't always paint a rosy picture of everyone he encountered in his Army days and told it like it was. This may be slightly offensive to some of future researchers, but I felt that the true observations from someone with boots on the ground should be kept as he observed them.

It needs to be noted that he missed 5 or 6 weeks of combat and nearly died from the leading cause of death, disease. He contracted both Dysentery and Malaria, the second of which he almost died. He had one of the most severe cases seen in the 37th Field Hospital and in the 133rd General Hospital in the Philippines.

Some of the material in this work were contributed to Gerald Astor for his book **Crisis In The Pacific – The Battles for the Philippine Islands by the Men Who Fought Them—An Oral History** and can be found in edited form in that work.

Paul M. Gerrish was born near Coon Rapids on the Raccoon River in Iowa, October 3rd, 1916, although his delayed Birth Certificate issued in 1946 gave his birth place as Glidden, Iowa. Before WWII Paul worked at many manual labor jobs. I was only told about a few of his adventures. He, with several of his uncles (probably Earl, Ralph and Leslie Wilson) drove to Eastern Oregon in a model T Ford to cut firewood. They were hired to work in the Blue Mountains which cover the SE corner of Washington state and the NE corner of Oregon. They camped in the mountains east of Seneca, Oregon and used a saw Powered by the Model T to cut the firewood. He talked about how cold it was in those mountains that winter, explaining how they had a tub sitting next to their fire. The

side near the fire was boiling and the other side was frozen solid. Since I was small he liked to tell Paul Bunyan and similar tales. I thought this was a tall tail until I had a janitorial job in the early 1970s cleaning the Weather Service office at the Olympia, WA Airport. I asked the person on duty at which temperature this would occur and he said under -60F. I remembered that my dad had mentioned that this occurred in the high country east of Seneca. In February 10th, 1933 Seneca tied Ukiah for the lowest temperature ever recorded in the state of Oregon with low of -54F. As they were camped in the mountains several thousand feet higher than Seneca the stories in this book became more plausible than I had first considered them.

The other jobs he mentioned over the years was being a cook at a CCC camp and working on the Kingsley dam which was a WPA project north of Ogallala, Nebraska that created Lake McCaughey which was the second largest hydraulically filled earthen dam in the world at the time of its completion. His CCC jobs had been as far west as Klamath Falls, Oregon where he was joined by one of his uncles, Earl Wilson.

CHAPTER 1 Cheyenne

The gymnasium like room at the Cheyenne Wyoming Induction Center was full of men when Jerrold "Doodle" and I arrived there at 11:00 a.m. on March 11, 1941 and were told to wait for instructions.

Doodle tugged at his belt saying, "My stomach is getting lank. I wonder what we are supposed to do for dinner?"

"We will probably be provided with something like box lunches," I answered remembering my experiences with the Civilian Conservation Corps.

"That will be all right if the box is big enough."

We didn't have long to wonder as a voice on the P.A. system said, "Give me your attention. You will each be given a fifty cent meal ticket that will be honored by any restaurant in Cheyenne."

As we left the center I suggested, "Let's walk a few blocks and find a restaurant further from here so we won't have to wait so long in a line."

"That sounds like a good idea," Doodle responded as we hurried past a crowded diner.

We found a clean restaurant with an empty booth. After looking over the menu, Doodle ordered a steak dinner for forty cents. I ordered roast turkey at the same price. The dinners included a generous piece of pie of our choice.

We finished eating and gave our tickets to the cashier who said, "I can't give you cash for your change but you can have anything in the showcase."

In those days, I was a slave to tobacco and took a package of Paul Jones cigarettes which were priced at ten cents.

Back at the center I asked a sergeant, "When will we get our physicals?"

"We run them through in the order of their arrival. Where did you come from?"

"Ogallala, Nebraska."



Paul Gerrish, 1940

"Oh yes, six of you came from Ogallala. You were the last to arrive so you will be the last to go through."

"The men are not being called as fast as they were this morning."

"The doctors are not army but come under contract which is usually two or four hours and we have fewer in the afternoon."

Doodle and I had met Duane Jennings, from Paxton and Ed Hiner from Arthur along with two other men neither of us knew, at the Ogallala Union Pacific Station that morning. After our talk with the sergeant we located Hiner and Jennings and passed the information on to them.

We spent the afternoon elbowing our way through the crowd and talking to men we had met in bygone years. I saw two men I'd gone to school with in 1928 when we were in the sixth grade.

At 5:30 p.m. we were issued more meal tickets and told to return by 6:30.

Jennings, went with us to the restaurant we had gone to at noon. Doodle ordered another steak and I asked for roast beef. Jennings, intent on filling his fat stomach told the waitress, "Bring me two orders of spaghetti."

For my change I took Champ and Power House candy bars, both were four-ounce five-centers.

It was 7:30 when we were called for the physical. The doctors had not returned after supper so the physical was brief. Each of us was given a bottle to fill and label. We then stepped on a scale where we were weighed and measured. I remembered at the pre-induction physical Dr. Vandiver had told me, "All of the men I have examined have passed the physical at Cheyenne."

Who could fail?

Since we were going to leave on an 8:30 p.m. train for Fort Leavenworth, Kansas we were issued seventy-five cent meal tickets for next morning's breakfast on the train. Jennings, was gleeful saying, "Gee, I can get three ham and egg breakfasts for this." Doodle answered, "Kid, would you believe that you would have to use two of these tickets to get one breakfast like that on the train?"

Turning to me, Jennings, asked, "Are they really that high?"

"Yes, and you will be lucky to get a butterhorn and coffee for six-bits."

"I THINK YOU GUYS ARE KIDDING ME."

We went east from Cheyenne back through Brule, Nebraska which Doodle and I called "Home Town" and on through Ogallala where Doodle's brother Jim and his wife Esther, who was my sister, had taken us early that morning. Doodle remarked, "For all of the good we

accomplished in Cheyenne we could have spent the day at home and got on the train here tonight."

"Yes, but that wouldn't be like the army."

Soon after leaving Omaha, went to the diner for breakfast. For our seventy-five cent meal tickets we were offered a choice of coffee, toast, and oatmeal or coffee, toast, and scrambled eggs. We got the scrambled eggs and then wished we had ordered the oatmeal.

We arrived at Fort Leavenworth just in time for dinner. Doodle and I had both been through similar reception centers with the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) and had a fair idea of what we would be doing for the next few days. We didn't bother to enlighten Jennings, and the others.

CHAPTER 2

Fort Leavenworth

When Doodle and I arrived at Fort Leavenworth on Wednesday, March 12, 1941 we caught up with Lynn Hull who was from Brule and had left four days before we did.

We were assigned to barracks and given a cot and bedding. There was just enough room between cots to walk. While we were making our beds in accordance with the instructor's directions, I got acquainted with the men on each side of me. Bill Ledford and "Tack" Hammer were both from Wyoming.

While at Fort Leavenworth we were given vaccinations and inoculations. We took tests and were initiated to kitchen police duty which was usually called K.P. We received enough close order drill to be able to line up and march in some semblance of an army formation.

We were issued clothing that would have to last us through basic training. We were supplied a set of blue denim fatigue pants and jacket, an olive drab shirt and pants, a pair of shoes, three pairs of sox, one pair of long underwear, two each of undershorts and shirts. Then came a web belt, black necktie, raincoat, overcoat and a lighter coat that the army insisted on calling a blouse. My blouse was one that was left over from World War I and it fit like a corset and had a collar too tight to button.

Back in the barracks, Sgt. Short gave us orders, "Put on your O.D.s and black ties to get ready for the retreat formation."

One of the Wyoming men, Van Buskirk, who hadn't bothered to scrape the horse manure off his cowboy boots asked, "Sgt Short, what am I supposed to do, I don't know how to tie that necktie."

Sgt. Short roared, "There's a big mirror in the washroom and you can just get yourself in there and practice until you get it tied. Then you report back to me so that I can see that you are doing it right."

The auditorium where we went for our Army General Classification Test was divided in half with the segregated troops occupying one side. While the test was in progress we kept hearing shouting and laughter from the segregated section. There were constant comments like, "Man, how am I expected to know all of this. Hey, man, you got the answer to that one?*"

In spite of the distraction, I made a score of 136 which would always put me in the top five percent. I've always wondered if I could have made the possible 150 if the hall would have been reasonably quiet.

The low point of my stay at Fort Leavenworth was signing up for the service life insurance and being told that \$5.70 would be deducted from

my meager \$21.00 per month pay.

Saturday night I spruced up with my funny looking WWI blouse and overseas cap that was big enough to rest on my ears. Hammer asked, "What are you up to?"

"I'm going over to the orderly room and get a pass to go into town."

"You mean that you are going to ask that ornery looking first Sgt. for a pass?"

"Oh, sure, Sgt. McBiff may do a lot of barking but he probably won't bite."

"Well I wouldn't risk it."

As I stepped into the orderly room, Sgt McBiff roared, "What do you want?"

"I want a pass to go into town."

"You can't go like that."

"Why?"

"You are out of uniform."

"This is the uniform that was issued."

"You can't wear that blouse and that misfit of a cap on pass."

"What should I wear?"

"Go ask your platoon sergeant. Now, Out! Out! Out!" McBiff shouted wagging his finger in the direction of the door. Back in the barracks, I told Cpl. Jenkins my problem.

He said, "You can wear your overcoat instead of that blouse and get out your needle and take a tuck in the back of your cap.

With my overcoat properly buttoned and a three-quarter inch tuck in the back of my cap I once again entered the orderly room with Sgt. McBiff shouting, "Now what do you want?"

"I want a pass to go into town."

"Why do you want to go to town?"

"It's Saturday night and I just want to look the town over."

"That's not a good enough reason to get a pass."

"I also want to go to a movie."

"Can't give you a pass for that either."

"What about chasing women?"

"No."

"What reason do I have to have to get a pass?"

"Something better than you can give. Now don't bother me anymore. Out! Out! Out!"

At 11:00 a.m. on Sunday. March 15 we were going to board a troop train headed for Camp Roberts, California. In true army fashion we went to the railroad station more than an hour before the train was due. We stood

there facing the cold north wind with the snow pelting us. If I'd known then that it would be nearly five years before I'd see another day that cold I might have enjoyed it more. As it was I stood there trying to retreat further into my friendly overcoat.

CHAPTER 3

On To California

We huddled in our overcoats as names were called to board the train. Names were called in alphabetical order with the caller finally barking, "Gerrish, Geyer, Grange."

We boarded the train together and I noticed that I was just tall enough to see over the heads of the other two and would outweigh Grange by twenty pounds. That meant I'd get the top bunk with the other two sharing the lower.

The corporal who assigned us to seats asked Geyer. What is your height and weight."

"I'm five foot nine and weigh one-seventy." Geyer told him.

Turning to me the corporal asked, "And yours?"

Using Geyer's two inch and thirty pound fudge factor I said, "Five eleven and two hundred."

Granger the shorter of us doubled the fudge factor and said, "I'm six feet and two-hundred-twenty pounds."

The corporal laughed and remarked, "All of you must be football players. Well I guess the biggest liar gets the top bunk."

"Hey. I thought it would be the biggest man," I shouted.

"Well, you are not really all that much bigger than fatso," The corporal answered as he pointed at the chubby Grange.

The troop train was furnished with an army kitchen and we soon got the order, "Get your mess kits ready as dinner is going to be served."

Kitchen Police carried boilers of stew and coffee down the aisle ladling it into our mess kits and cups. Another K.P. followed giving each of us a thick slice of army field bread.

Geyer looked at his portion of stew and asked, "Is that little dab supposed to last all afternoon?"

"You're lucky to get that much," the K.P. retorted as he moved on down the aisle.

We would go southwest through McPherson, Hutchinson and Pratt, Kansas. During the night we crossed the Texas Panhandle through Amarillo and then south through New Mexico. The train would go into Texas again at El Paso. From there the direction would be west through New Mexico, Arizona, and Southern California. That was not the most direct route from Fort Leavenworth to Camp Roberts but would give us a chance to see more of the United States.

We had just finished that Sunday dinner of stew and field bread when I heard Geyer greet, "Hello Cowboy. How are you doing?"

I looked up and saw a six foot, 220 pound light haired man in his early thirties.

He answered Geyer, "Well, I'm doin' all right except for the low-heeled shoes. They will take some getting used to. Why a man could even get a permanent kink in his spine walking around in these sodbuster's shoes."

In the years to come I would see a lot of Cowboy Walter David and would find out that he had four great loves. He loved all kinds of alcoholic-beverages. He loved all forms of gambling. He loved to tell stories. He also loved women. Women, they might have been higher on the list but our army journeys seldom took us to places where they existed in great numbers.

The 1941 troop trains were not known for making fast time and we always said that they would side-track to let the section cars go past. With the slowness of the troop train and the longest possible route we were on the train three days and three nights.

That first day we did fare better for supper as we were served the usual army Sunday evening meal of potato salad, cold cuts and bread.

Monday morning, March 17 we awakened to the scenery of New Mexico as we had crossed the Texas Panhandle during the night. We were served a breakfast of French toast, syrup and coffee. That was a breakfast that would become extremely monotonous during my years of army life.

Soon after our breakfast the train was sidetracked and we were ordered off the train for calisthenics. We would go through that routine about three times each day.

Monday's dinner was better than Sunday's had been. One K.P. followed with milk chocolate bars for dessert. He would break them in two and give each man a half.

Cowboy David strolled down the aisle after dinner and stopped for his usual chat. He told us, "That man serving the chocolate bars measured the middle with his fingers and the trouble was that his fingers on one hand were longer than those on the other. Well that made a good deal for my buddy but I got the side that he measured with his short fingers."

One of the callisthenic stops was at Columbus, New Mexico. A twelve year old boy tried to sell the services of his sister. Of course with the shortness of the stop and the fact that we could not break ranks kept any of the men from availing themselves of any such service. The boy did assure us that his sister was good saying, "Shes'a a good one to go to bed with. I know because sometimes I go to bed with her myself."

On Tuesday, March 18 we awakened in California and went past the Salton Sea. The rest of the trip across Southern California was notable only

for the snail's pace of the train.

On Wednesday, March 19 we arrived at Camp Roberts. The grass covered hills in that area are green in March and if someone would have told us that they would turn brown in the early part of May we wouldn't have believed them.

We were all eager to get away from the cramped quarters of the troop train even though it would mean the rigors of basic training.

Before we get too far along I'd like to say that all of the men the army was recruiting at that time were twenty-one to thirty-six years of age. The induction of eighteen years olds wouldn't start until we were well involved in World War II.

CHAPTER 4

Arrival At Camp Roberts

Camp Roberts, California, nestled in a valley surrounded by the Coast Range, was about half constructed when we arrived there on March, 19, 1941. As the buildings for a battalion area were completed they were filled with recruits.

We dismounted from the train and stood in formation awaiting orders. Once more our names were called off and we fell out and reformed behind the designated guides. Lining up in a column of two we were marched a mile and a half to our new home which was Company G, 83rd Infantry Training Battalion. I was assigned to the 2nd platoon.

Our platoon leader, Lt. Wood, introduced himself and the noncoms who were Platoon Sgt. Lane, Sgt. Hardeman, Corporal Bredwell and Corporal Hrachek. They would be in charge of the five squads of twelve recruits each.

I already knew a number of men in the platoon. The other two men from Brule, Doodle McCarty and Lynn Hull and two others from the same county, Duane Jennings, and Ed Hiner. We also had Geyer, Grange and Bill Ledford. Cowboy Walt David was assigned to the 1st platoon.

We were issued cots and I set mine up between Red Jacobson and Dale Keeler who was at the end of the room. Directly across the aisle from Keeler was Hendricks who was 250 pounds of cussedness with large protruding eyes that could take on a crazy expression.

The first evening we were all sitting on our bunks cleaning our newly issued M-1903 rifles when I happened to glance up at Hendricks and saw him staring at me. He yelled, "What in the hell are you looking at me for?"

"The cat can look at the king so I should be able to look at you."

"Oh, a smart alec is in our midst. Well, I'm just going to teach you a lesson right now. I'm going to knock seven kinds of hell right out of you."

As Hendricks started toward me with clenched fist, I stood up with the Springfield clubbed. Hendricks stopped just beyond my reach saying, "Now, you wouldn't really hit me with that would you?"



Camp Roberts—1941

"Just take one more step and we'll both find out."

Hendricks stood and stared briefly and then retreated to his own corner.

Next day we were taking a five minute break on one of the hillsides. Walt Huff, a Wyoming man, and I were talking to each other when Hendricks shouted, "Huff, you are not particular who you associate with, are you?"

"I certainly am and I sure don't want to associate with you." Hendricks jumped up and started toward Huff saying, "I'll just knock seventeen kinds of hell right out of you for that smart talk."

As Huff stood up he unsheathed his bayonet saying, "All right you big slob just keep coming and you'll get your guts spilled."

Hendricks beat a hasty retreat.

The ways Huff and I had defended ourselves and Hendrick's reactions had not gone unnoticed by the other men. From that time on when Hendricks would threaten someone he would find himself facing two, or more, men who were often armed with the nearest item that they could use for a weapon. When he would see that the odds were not in his favor he would always back down. As Huff said, "Hendricks may be crazy but he is definitely not stupid."

By Sunday, March 30 we were getting used to the Camp Roberts routine. It was late forenoon when Sgt. Lane ordered, "All hands assemble on the first floor Lt. Wood wants to talk to you."

Lt Wood said, "One of the men, Grange, went on sick call this morning and was sent to the hospital where it was determined that he has chicken pox. We now have to put the entire platoon on a working quarantine. You will go ahead with your training but will be kept isolated from the rest of the company as much as possible. You will go to the mess hall last and to one corner that will be assigned to you. You will be confined to the barracks evenings and weekends. That means that you can't go to the PX. There will be no going to the movies or to the battalion recreation room. You can't even take walks outside the barracks.

There wasn't another case of the chicken pox and the quarantine was lifted after two weeks.

CHAPTER 5

The Quarantine

With the working quarantine confining us to the barracks evenings we sometimes played simple card games like casino and fantan to pass the time.

Two squads were downstairs with the other three on the second floor. It was on the second floor that most of the card playing was done. I came down from one card playing session and saw Hendricks threatening Emil Gusinski who was more commonly called Guzink. I was directly behind Hendricks who was advancing on the retreating Guzink as he backed down the aisle. Suddenly, Guzink reached down and picked up the cigarette butt box which contained about twenty pounds of sand and hurled it right at Hendrick's head. Both Hendricks and I hit the floor with the box crashing through the window. Dashing out of his room, Sgt. Lane asked, "What was that noise?"

Guzink pointed his finger at me saying, "It's all Gerrish's fault."

"What do you mean by saying it was my fault? I was an innocent bystander and just ducked to keep that box from knocking my head off."

"Well if you hadn't moved it wouldn't have gone through the window."

Turning to Hendricks, Sgt. Lane asked, "Why was Guzink throwing the box at you?"

"Oh, I wasn't even in here. I just came from the washroom so don't try to get me involved."

"Well, you certainly got out here and on the floor in a hurry and you were the nearest to Guzink. Since there wasn't any trouble between you and Guzink you won't mind helping him clean up the mess. I'll check back in fifteen minutes and this had better be cleaned up. Damn you Hendricks you just keep actin' like you have been and I'll put the fear of God into you."

Any diversion was welcome and one evening a third platoon corporal had that platoon's awkward squad between the barracks for some extra drill. There was a good audience from the windows of our barracks as we enjoyed watching and remarking on their antics. It was the corporal who gave us the biggest laugh. He called the squad to attention and shouted, Now, I said to hold those rifles horizontal and when I say horizontal I mean straight up and down."

The second week of our quarantine was rainy which made our confinement more difficult. It wasn't as easy to get men from the other platoons to go to the PX for supplies as it had been the first week. I did talk

my old friend Hammer from the third platoon into making one trip to the PX for us.

"Wimpy" MacDonald, who earned his nickname with his table manners would step on equipment or walk through a stack of rifles pretending that he hadn't even seen them. One day, Sgt. Lane told him, "Damn it, MacDonald, , if you kick one more rifle or other piece of equipment I know who is going to scrub the barracks steps tonight."

Wimpy retorted, "You won't see me out scrubbing no barracks steps at night."

Sgt. Lane didn't bother to answer but that evening Wimpy with pail, scrub brush and G.I. soap spent the entire evening from supper until bed-time scrubbing on the steps."

Saturday, April 5 our quarantine was lifted and there would be passes to San Miguel and Pasa Robles in the afternoon. Of course we had the usual Saturday forenoon inspection.

Right after dinner, I donned my WWI blouse and went to the orderly room and asked for a pass. First Sergeant Jennings (no relation to Duane) looked at me and snorted, "You can't go on pass in that masquerade."

"This is the blouse that was issued to me."

"You either get another blouse or no pass."

I went to the supply room and they didn't have any blouses so I had to be content with a visit to the PX.

CHAPTER 6

April Showers

During April it rained enough to keep the hills around Camp Roberts green but as the month wore on the weather became warmer.

We soon got acquainted with the rifle range which was five hilly miles of hiking from our barracks. The men on the east side of the camp had to hike an extra mile to the rifle range and other training areas which were all west of the camp.

The scanty supply of clothing issued at Fort Leavenworth had to last the thirteen weeks of basic training. Fatigues were the order for drill. We would don our O.D.s (Olive Drab woolies) for the evening retreat formation and usually for the rest of the evening.

Blue denim fatigues, underwear and sox were washed Saturday P.M.s which would give them until Monday morning to dry. When the O.D.s became too dirty the captain decreed that the evening uniform would be fatigues while we all sent our O.D.s to the cleaners.

The battalion areas were around the mile long parade grounds with our battalion near the southwest corner. We were soon introduced to the various training areas for machineguns, mortars, pistols, map studying, bayonet, bivouac and maneuver areas, all of them deep in the heart of the steep hills.

On Saturday, April 12 I managed to trade my WWI blouse for an approved one. Walt Huff and I decided to go to San Miguel.

Right after noon we went over to the station where a bus would leave every 15 minutes for San Miguel. We saw a swarming sea of recruits trying to board each bus and decided to walk the five miles rather than wait for the uncertain possibility of a ride on a bus.

San Miguel had a prewar population of about 600. That afternoon it looked like the village was about to be carried away by the swarming hordes of soldiers. It took us less than two hours to see all that the town had to offer and we headed back to camp. The bus situation was an exact duplicate of that at the post. We found a taxi which we shared with two other dogfaces for the ride back to Camp Roberts.

CHAPTER 7

Cowboy Outwits The Military Police

The guardhouse was across the street from our mess hall. By most of the company that was not considered an asset but Cowboy Walt David of the first platoon managed to capitalize on the location of that facility.

Cowboy was picked up at 1 a.m. by the M.P. s and forced into the paddy wagon with the other drunks for a ride back to camp.

The usual procedure for those who were picked up as drunk and disorderly was a night in the stockade and then a release to their company commander who would give them a week of extra duty and of course a writeup in their folder. Cowboy had other plans.

Despite his size Cowboy was agile. When the drunk wagon arrived at the guardhouse and a guard opened the back door Cowboy leapfrogged over the startled M.P. and dashed around the mess hall. By the time the M.P.s could close the door and chase Cowboy around the building not a living object was in sight. The M.P.s did look into some of the barracks but could see nothing but sleeping men. Cowboy was safe in his own bed so that there wasn't even a suspicious empty cot. Since Cowboy had been too drunk to give them any name or other information they never did know who it was who escaped.

Cowboy never tired of telling how he outwitted the M.P.s and how he got his clothing, off and into bed so fast.

CHAPTER 8

Army Sick Call, 1941 Style

"Well Soldier, was your outfit scheduled for a twenty mile march today?" That question came from the army doctor at the dispensary where I'd gone on sick call.

"Sir, I am not goldbricking. I came on sick call because I have an ache in my left shoulder."

"Does the right one pain you too?"

"No Sir, just the left."

"It could be caused by your tonsils or teeth."

"No Sir, it's my shoulder."

"Well open wide and we'll have a look."

Unbuttoning my shirt I held it open, wide.

"No Soldier, I meant for you to open your mouth so that I can have a look at your tonsils. If the shoulders ache they may have to be removed surgically."

"No Sir, I just won't let you or anyone else remove them."

"Why? No use has ever been found for them."

"Sir, I've found a use for mine."

"What possible use could you have for them?"

"Sir, I use them to hang my arms on."

"Soldier, I'm talking about your tonsils."

"Sir, it's my shoulder that aches."

"Soldier, Open your mouth wide."

I opened my mouth with the doctor inserting a tongue depressor any saying, "Say ahh."

"Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh."

"That's enough. How long have you had the infection?"

"Ahh agg bubu wuwuwuh ugg gook."

"Soldier, you will have to talk plainer than that if you want me to understand you."

"Wah gagu tatu ahh ikk outmanow."

The doctor finally removed the tongue depressor and said, "Soon we hope to be issued some of those new miracle sulfa drugs to help clear those infections. Right now all we can do is give you a salt water gargle. You gargle with salt water twice each day for a month then come back and we will see about removing those tonsils."

"Sir, could I just have a supply of aspirin so that I can take a couple at bedtime to relieve the pain?"

"All right, but don't forget to come back in thirty days."

I departed with the aspirin never to see that tonsil snatching doctor again.

Later, I was to learn that the pain in my shoulder was due to arthritis and it is doubtful if the removal of my tonsils would have helped.

CHAPTER 9

May At Camp Roberts

With the coming of May the rains stopped and the thermometer climbed above 90 degrees every day. The beautiful green hills turned brown almost overnight.

Opal, my girl friend, had assured me that she would get a job near where I would be stationed so that we could see each other often. She did move to California, but it was to Napa where one of her ex-boyfriends lived. That was the last time I heard from her.

On Monday, May 5 about a third of the 240 man company got sick from food poisoning with a number of them going to the hospital. Red Jacobson was too ill to fill out the admission papers so he was dumped on the grass outside of the hospital and left for three hours until he finally mustered enough strength to be admitted.

It was always with great reluctance that most of us went on morning sick call. In addition to having the doctor talk to us as if we were goldbricking we often got unpleasant work details after reporting back to the company.

Tramping over the concrete hard trails, my feet were blistered. Still smarting from my experience of going to the dispensary with a sore shoulder, it took some urging from Corporal Bredwell and Sgt. Lane for me to take my sore feet on sick call.

The doctor asked gruffly. "What's your problem Soldier?"

"Sir, I have blisters on my feet."

"Was your outfit going on a twenty mile march today?"

"Sir, it wasn't that far and my feet were blistered before I started to think about today."

"Well, sit down and take off your shoes and sox as I just can't see through them."

Sitting in the chair the doctor pointed at, I removed my shoes and sox.

Looking at my feet the doctor asked, "Why don't you take better care of your feet Soldier?"

"Sir, I came over here hoping to get some help and advice on taking care of them."

"You should stay off your feet."

"Sir, that's good advice but unfortunately I haven't been issued any other means of transportation."

"Well, stay off them all you can."

"Sir, I'll try to do that but isn't there anything else that can be done?"

"Soldier, we will supply you with some ointment to rub on the raw places and some powder to put in your sox. Make sure that you change your sox three times a day."

"Sir, I have just three pairs of sox."

"That's just right you can wash the three pair each night and they will be dry the next morning."

The ointment and powder did give some relief.

On Saturday, May 10 I got an afternoon pass to go into Pasa Robles. The bus service had improved with Doodle and I going to the bus station and getting on the second bus.

Pasa Robles was a town of about 10,000 and not nearly big enough to absorb the throngs of soldiers from Camp Roberts. After looking at the few sights for a couple of hours we were ready to head back to our barracks.

Near the end of May we were issued suntan pants and shirts to replace our woolie O.D.s. By some miracle we were issued two outfits so we would be able to send one to the laundry.

On-the range with Browning Automatic Rifles we set the selector on Semi-automatic fire which meant we had to squeeze the trigger for each shot. I took aim and gave the trigger a squeeze and was surprised to have the twenty round clip empty on the one squeeze.

"Get that man out of there," the range officer roared.

After a stern lecture the officer told a corporal, "Now show this soldier how to fire one shot at a time."

The corporal said, "Now watch me and see how I set this selector on Semi-automatic fire."

After making sure that I knew where the selector was and how to operate it the corporal assumed a prone position and squeezed the trigger. It really didn't surprise me that all twenty rounds fired.

It was difficult for me to keep from laughing but somehow I managed not to let out a snicker. The rifle was removed from the range.

CHAPTER 10

June At Camp Roberts

As June, 1941 came the thermostat on the sun was turned up so that the days got even hotter than they did in May. The wind would blow and the dust would roll making our sweat soaked clothing muddy. Fortunately it cooled enough at night so we could sleep.



Camp Roberts—Summer 1941

During June night maneuvers were added to the already crowded training schedule. The first week of June, we had three night maneuvers. In the army night work was usually not in place of day activities but in addition to them.

Some of those nights would end with a bivouac in our pup tents with me sharing a tent with Walt Huff. Our bed consisted of one blanket spread on the rock hard dirt. We would brush the clods of dirt and rocks from under the blanket but the surface was never smooth so we always felt like we were steeping on a bed of rocks.

To use up some of the money we helped add to the company fund we had a going-away party called a "beer bust" on Friday, June 13. There was leather like fried chicken, watermelon, pop and beer. We drank the beer from our aluminum canteen cups which made it taste like aluminum. The second and additional cups would always taste better.

As our basic training was nearing the end rumors were rife as to where we would go. The most likely place seemed to be the 40th Division at Camp San Luis Obispo. California.

On the morning of June, 25 the company was assembled and then addressed by Col. Nemo, Battalion Commander. He told us that we would be ready to leave at 9:00 A.M. for San Luis Obispo. The entire 40th Division was poorly equipped and poorly trained as they had not been mobilized until the early part of March, later than most National Guard divisions. Since it was a National Guard unit we would probably find that a number of the men in each company would be from the same town and be clannish.

CHAPTER 11

Arrival At San Luis Obispo

The truck ride to San Luis Obispo was routine and when we arrived we were lined up on the parade ground. As our names were called for a unit we were to fall out and go to that unit's guide.

My name was called for the 79th Infantry Brigade Headquarters Company along with Duane Jennings, and Cecil "Hardpan" Lanning,. I wondered what I had done to get into a three man group with those two duds.

We went over to the soldier holding the 79th's guidon and met Private First Class (and don't you forget it) Jim Mabbott and truck driver Frank Campos who had been entrusted to pick up the newest additions to the company.

It was noon when we arrived at the company area so we left our bags in the supply tent and went to the mess hall for dinner after a brief introduction to Sgt Lang, communications chief.

After dinner we waited outside of the mess hall for Sgt. Lang. He arrived with another non-com introducing him as Sgt. Gene Hawtry, motor pool chief.

Sgt. Hawtry said, "Since Jennings, and Lanning, have been assigned to my section, I might as well show them to their tents."

As we walked, Sgt. Lang told me, "We have been getting men from Camp Roberts for two weeks. You men bring the company to full strength. The only space available for you to bunk is in a tent with some message center men. I don't know which section you will be assigned to but that will be your quarters. Those two basics were easy to assign as the only places we can use them are the motor pool and the kitchen as steady K.P.s."

Arriving at the tent, I was introduced to Sgt. Ed Duensing, message center chief, Al Jesse, Bill O'Neal, Matt Webber and a man I had already met, "I outrank you privates" Jim Mabbott.

At the supply tent, Supply Sgt. Place issued me a canvas cot and bedding.

Just as I was putting the finishing touches on my bed making a private came in and introduced himself as Bill Hanrahan, saying, "First Sgt. Rinke is ready to interview you."

As we walked toward the orderly tent, Hanrahan partially prepared me saying, "Albert Rinke was janitor in the armory at Sacramento for 27 years. Our old captain was peeved at being transferred and promoted Rinke to First Sgt. before leaving. The new C.O. just didn't have the heart

to break the old fellow and let him stay on as topkick."

Entering the orderly tent, I saw a big red nose with a shriveled old man barely five feet tall standing behind it. Looking at his O.D. shirt, I saw 1st Sgt. chevrons taking the entire space from shoulder to elbow. Faded blue fatigue pants ended in leggings that came too high on his knees. On the right side he wore a holstered pistol with the bottom of the holster hanging below the top of the legging. Around his neck was a lanyard with a brass whistle. An ancient and battered campaign hat completed the costume.

"Sit down there draftee," the old man growled pointing a bony finger at a chair.

Taking his seat behind the desk, Rinke started his rehearsed spiel, "Our company provides communications for the Brigadier General and the two infantry regiments, the 159th and 184th and back to division HQ. We have a number of sections; staff section, intelligence, message center, wire, supply, motor pool and kitchen. Oh yes, there is a radio section too."

Sgt. Rinke explained the work of each section and wound up with, "Now you can get into just any of those sections you want."

He started down the list again saying, "Staff is full, intelligence is full, message center is full, wire is full, supply is full, motor pool is full. There is room in the kitchen for steady K.P.s Oh yes, there is room in the radio section too. Which one of those two do you want?"

"Sergeant, it's a hard choice but I'll try the radio section."

"Well you just remember, that it is your decision"

It didn't take long to figure out that Sgt. Rinke didn't like draftees and he didn't like radio men. Since the radio section had been filled with about 15 men from Camp Roberts, Rinke knew where to get most of the men for K.P. and other details.

In the radio section only Sgt. Charles Blair was from Sacramento. Paul Engeli, George Gilbert, Otto "Little Red" Schukard, Omer "Gumshoe" Tomson, and alcoholic Phil Sheridan were from other parts of California and were considered just as much outcasts by the Sacramento majority as the draftees.

CHAPTER 12

Getting Acquainted

After my interview with Sgt. Rinke I went to my tent to finish getting organized. I had to turn in my suntans and draw O.D.s to conform to the authorized uniforms. Even though San Luis Obispo was cooler than Camp Roberts I wasn't enthusiastic about woolen clothing in the good old summer-time.

The company street was about fifty feet wide with two rows of tents on each side. The two inner rows faced the street with the two outer rows facing away from the company street so they were back to back.

For the evening retreat ceremony we formed a double line in the middle of the street. After retreat Sgt. Rinke announced, "Chow will be in fifteen minutes. I'll blow my whistle and you will fall into this same formation and we will march to the mess hall in a military manner. We want to show the new men some real soldiering."

At the shrill of Rinke's whistle we dashed out and lined up facing a row of tents. Trying to look and sound like a drill Sgt. Rinke yelled, "Attenshut, forward hatch."

We marched forward and when I got to the tent I stopped marching and marked time. The man behind started to push and urged, "Go on and try to climb the tent."

Most of the others were trying to go over, through or between the tents. Rinke finally blew his whistle and shouted, "Come on back and line up again."

As we walked back I asked Sgt. Duensing, "Aren't we supposed to stop marching and mark time when we come to an obstacle?"

"Yes, but that wouldn't heckle Rinke as much. He doesn't know the drill and should ask one of the other non-coms to take over when he wants the company moved. He often gives the wrong orders or tries to coin new ones to fit the situation."

Rinke walked back and forth in front of the ranks glowering. His exercise completed he turned to the mammoth wire chief and asked, "Sgt. Irving, will you take charge of the company and march to the mess hall?"

"I'll be happy to do that Sgt. Dinky."

Sgt. Irving always called the old fellow Sgt. Dinky. If it bothered Sgt. Dinky he never let it show but none of the other men ever tried to call him Sgt. Dinky.

In the mess hall I started to take a seat next to the aisle. P.F.C. Mabbottt said, "You'll have to sit over as I'm a private first class and I get to sit at the head of the table."

We were busy eating when we were interrupted by the blast of Rinke's whistle. He roared, "You men talk too much and too loud. If you don't quite down I'm gonna make you sit at attention."

Al Jesse said, "We have to listen to that at least once each day. If he ever figures out how we can sit at attention and eat we'll probably be doing it."

"Oh, he would be a barrel of laughs if he were in some other company," wisecracked O'Neal.

After supper Sgt. Charles Blair, radio chief, introduced himself to me saying, "Sorry, but I was out on a training mission all day and couldn't get to you earlier. We will start your training as a radio operator tomorrow. The men go to the division radio school to learn the Morse code with the rest of the training here in the company. We do have problems with Rinke and his endless details. Besides getting at least half of the K.P.s out of the radio section he has that scrap lumber pile that he insists on moving at least once a week. Then there are the drainage ditches that have to be moved frequently. We are also supposed to be getting the company area landscaped. It is a sad situation that a pipsqueak like Rinke can take men away from valuable training for his details but our C.O., Captain Planning, spends his time with the brigade staff officers and lets Rinke run the company."

Doodle McCarty arrived with some news, "I'm in a rifle company in the 184th. Wimpy McDonald and Lance are in the same tent. I had a pencil and pad and wrote down the names of a lot of the men and the units they were called for and that's how I could find you."

About 15 minutes before time for "Lights out" Doodle took his leave saying, "I'd better get back to my new home while the lights are still glowing."

"Goodnight Doodle it has been a long day since we rolled out at 5:30 this morning."

As the years went by I'd see fewer of the men from Camp Roberts. By mid-1945 Cowboy David and I were with the 40th Cav. Recon. Troop. The only other one I knew anything about at that time was Elvin McCune who was a warrant officer in the 40th Signal Company.

CHAPTER 13

What? No Pass

Saturday night arrived, and I thought it would be nice to go, see what the town of San Luis Obispo had to offer. Entering the orderly tent, I said, "Sgt. Rinke, I want a pass to go into San Luis Obispo."

"You have just been here for three days and you want a pass already? Why?"

"I thought that it would' be nice to get out of camp. I've had just two short passes during the four months that I've been in the army."

"Don't you like, it here in camp?"

"Yes, but I would like, to see something besides soldiers for a change."

"You have everything you could possibly want here. You have the PX and you have your choice of several movies."

"Sgt., I didn't hear you mention wine, women and song."

"Well you ain't been here long enough to get a pass."

"I was here long enough to participate in last night's parade."

"That ain't got anything to do with going on pass."

"How long will it be before I can get a pass?"

"Well now, that just depends."

"Depends on what?"

"When I decide that you are responsible."

"Responsible for what?"

"When you show me that you are a responsible soldier."

Deciding that it was useless to try to reason with him I said,
"Goodnight Sergeant, have a good night's sleep and have pleasant dreams."

CHAPTER 14

On Into July

We celebrated Independence Day by putting on a parade for California's Governor Olson. The parade took the entire forenoon with the division marching past the reviewing stand by units.

After the parade all of the Sacramento men went on weekend pass. Once again I failed to get any kind of a pass. Sgt. Rinke told me, "We already have too many men on pass."

It was in late June or early July that President Roosevelt started to urge congress to extend the time of both the National Guard and the draftees. He also asked for authorization to send them overseas.

On Monday, July 7 Captain Planning, our C.O. gave us some good news, "Our basic training is over and we will have some Wednesdays for organized recreation in the afternoon. For Wednesday, I've arranged something special. We will get half a beef and a couple of kegs of beer and go to Lake Atascadero for a barbecued beef picnic. It will last into the evening and we can say it is a delayed Fourth of July celebration. You are all encouraged to invite wives, families and girl friends."

With the good food and beer we enjoyed the picnic which was a change from army routine.

The weekend of July 12 and 13 provided two firsts for me. On Saturday night I got a pass to go into San Luis Obispo. The trip wasn't anything special but I did get away from the camp for a few hours.

Sunday, my first turn at K.P. came so I could get acquainted with the kitchen personnel. Besides Mess Sgt. Phillips and the cooks there were four Chinese, Chan, Fat, Lim and Lieu, who were dogrobbers (orderlies) for the officers. Sgt. Rinke would irritate them by calling them "Japanese Boys."

Lieu had recently been on pass to Los Angeles and was arrested for being drunk and disorderly. He urged the police to call the paper so they could take his picture and put it on the front page. The police wouldn't cooperate and Lieu never forgave them for the slight.

We were told that we would be going out for a number of overnight bivouacs in preparation for the Washington maneuvers in August. We were allowed to buy sleeping bags so that we wouldn't have to make do with a couple of army blankets.

Our first maneuver was for three nights from July 17 through 19. We went fifty miles north near the Hearst castle at San Simeon. Otto "Little Red" Shuckard and I shared a pup tent. He would be my most frequent tent mate on subsequent maneuvers but sometimes I'd be with

Paul Engeli or Art Lohman, . We were lucky to get four hours sleep each night with two being more normal.

We went out again from Thursday, July 27 until Saturday.

Going out for maneuvers Wednesday or Thursday and coming back Saturday solved the pass problem for Saturday night as were too tired to do anything except go to bed.

The movies on the post were in big tents with all of the seats on the same level making it difficult to see. I seldom went to those movies.

Daring July, I spent much time on Rinke's yard details and K.P. Ray Tebbe, one of the radio trainees, finally decided that he was spending so much time on K.P. that he might as well take it steady. He soon became a cook and then mess sergeant. He made staff Sgt, a year and a half before I made it.

The last week of July, Captain Planning, told us a picnic had been arranged by the USO for Saturday, August 2 at San Simeon. Beer and barbecued beef would be provided by the company. The USO had invited 75 young women. He asked for a show of hands of those wanting to attend. Only a couple of hands were raised. As it was the first weekend of August all of the Sacramento men wanted to go home. All hands were skeptical of the USO.

Captain Planning, announced, "Since you don't want to volunteer I have no choice but to make that picnic a company detail. We just can't disappoint the USO and the 75 women they invited."

I did get a pass to go into San Luis Obispo on Monday, July 28. Those weeknight passes were limited to four hours but they did give a slight break from the army routine.

CHAPTER 15

Picnic At San Simeon

On the morning of Saturday, August 2 we got ready for the usual weekly inspection and talked about the afternoon's detail which would be the picnic at San Simeon.

"Where in the world does the USO expect to find 75 girls around San Simeon?" wondered Mabbot.

Optimistic Al Jesse answered, "They will probably have a couple of busloads from San Francisco or Los Angeles."

Disappointment at not getting the usual first weekend of the month pass was tempered by the prospect of meeting some young women.

At 1:00 p.m. we fell out to get into the trucks for the 50 mile drive along the coast. I climbed into the back of a six-by-six and sat next to Nello Dinelli, a truck driver, and asked, "How can you drive from back here?"

"Oh, mosta da time I drive but today I no drive."

"You have been working hard with the radio section and deserve a rest."

"Datsa what Sgt. Hawtry said. I lika to drive for da radio section."

"Do we treat you better?"

"Yes, you treata me better. You no maka da fun of da way I talk and you no maka da fun of me for being da farmer."

"We try to be the good guys and most of us have spent some time on a farm."

"You are da good guys. You know I learna a lot about da radio by driving for da radio section. I wasa out with Red Shuckard da other day and he woulda no get da other station. I told him, 'Red, you no getta da other station because you no gotta enough of da frequency. You giva da radio more of da frequency an by golly I betta dat you getta da other station.' Red he gava da radio more of da frequency and by golly, Red, he gotta da other station."

Managing to keep from laughing, I said, "Red probably appreciated you suggestion."

"Yes, he say, 'Nello, I just don't know whata I'd do withouta you.'"

All of the way to San Simeon, Nello kept talking to me about his trials and tribulations with the clannish Sacramento men before the arrival of the men from Camp Roberts. My ears ached but I did give an occasional yes or no or a nod of my head. He talked more that day than I was to hear him talk during the next four years.

By listening to Nello and sympathizing with him I gained a firm

friend. Nello would never allow anyone to make a disparaging remark about me.

At the park in San Simeon the beef was being barbecued. I asked mess Sgt. Phillips, "What are you going to do with all of that beef?"

"We want enough to feed everybody in our own company plus the girls and their families and friends who will be our company. They have been asked to bring family and friends."

The girls arrived in the late afternoon but instead of 75 there was just five. Each of the five was well chaperoned by several members of her own family.

We did have plenty of beer to drink and plenty of good food to eat but it was pretty much of a stag party and a big disappointment to all of the men in the company.

After feasting and drinking for a couple of hours we bid San Simeon goodbye and piled into the trucks for the ride back to San Luis Obispo where we arrived about 9:00 p.m. and were told that it was too late to get passes into town.

CHAPTER 16

Summer Daze

On Monday, August 4, I had an 8:00 a.m. appointment with the dentist. We were going out for an overnight maneuver right after noon so I had to prepare for that before going to the tooth mechanic.

Grabbing a book that I had been wanting to read and walking really fast I made it to the dentist's at 8:00 a.m. The clerk instructed, "Just find a place to sit down and I'll call you when it's your turn."

At 11:45 the clerk announced, "All of you can go back to your units for dinner but be back here by one O'clock sharp."

After dinner I went into the orderly tent and faced Sgt. Rinke saying, "The dentist didn't get to me this forenoon and so I have to return at 1:00 p.m."

"You will have to miss the overnigher but I'll have something for you to do when you return from the dentist."

"Sgt. Rinke, I'm sure that I can rely on you for that," I said as I departed.

Tuesday morning Sgt. Rinke ordered, "Gerrish, you can move the lumber pile today."

"So sorry Sgt. but I have to go back to the dentist."

"How long does it take then to fill a tooth?"

"Probably not very long after they get to me. It looks like the dentist made the week's appointments for 800 a.m. Monday. Since they are taking us alphabetically I should be called today."

My tooth was finally filled in the early afternoon. By properly pacing myself, I managed to get back to the company in time to get ready for the evening retreat formation.

Phil Sheridan who had missed the maneuver showed me how he put a barracks bag and foot locker under his cot so he could lie behind them and sleep. I told him, "That's fine for someone who is as thin as a rail but I don't think there is enough room for me."

On Saturday, August 9, I got another pass to go into town. San Luis Obispo was full of soldiers but the buildings did offer a different view than the tents at the camp.

On Friday, August 14, we were told that we would leave for the state of Washington and maneuvers at 5:00 a.m. the next morning. We would go up the coast route in trucks and arise at 3:00 a.m. each morning so we could get started at 5:00 a.m.

CHAPTER 17

On To Washington

At 5:00 a.m., Saturday, August 15, we climbed into the trucks to start north to Southwest Washington. We would join the 7th Div from Ft. Ord and the 3rd Div and 41st Divisions from Ft. Lewis, Wash. for the 4th Army maneuvers under the command of General Joseph Stillwell

After we crossed the Golden Gate Bridge we noticed a great difference in the natives as they turned out to line the streets and cheer as we drove through the small towns.

The first night we went into bivouac in a park in Petaluma. At supper we went through the chow line filling our mess kits. I walked over and sat on the grass with several others from the radio section. Sgt. Rinke came storming up to us yelling, "Hey, you herd of dimwits don't sit in a bunch but scatter out."

Picking up my mess kit, I started to leave with Red Schukard asking, "Where are you going?"

"I'm going over to the pup tent and get away from the old crab."

The old crab who was some distance from us had better ears than I gave him credit for having. He turned around and growled, "Well, you gotta learn somethin' sometime."

As we walked toward the tent I said, "Old Rinke seems to be even more grouchy than usual."

Red answered, "Yes, getting us into that formation to pitch pup tents must have been too much of a strain for old Pinocchio."

"That was funny but it was too bad that some of the men had to laugh right in the old goat's face."

Rinke didn't know the commands to get the company into a tent pitching formation so he made up his own. He had us line up in a double row. He had the front row do an about face. Next he had each row take several steps backward. He then walked back and forth between the two rows glowering. Finally, he thought of a solution and said, "I'll give you the command, 'Take distance, Take,' and on the second take you lift both arms and spread out like this."

Rinke then demonstrated the double arms length extend movement.

After getting us at the proper distance from each other he tried to figure out a way to have us pitch the tents by the numbers. It became so hilarious that some of the men couldn't keep from laughing while others made sarcastic remarks. Rinke finally asked Sgt. Lang to take charge.

The second day I was on K.P. which meant that I had to get up at 2:00 a.m. instead of sleeping until 3:00.

We drove through Eureka and stopped for a bivouac in a park in the Redwoods. Rinke approached me while I was washing the stew pots and said, "You have a turn at K.P. again tomorrow."

"All right Sergeant, but remember it is against division orders to give K.P. for punishment."

"Oh, no, it's not punishment. It's your regular duty."

"Even with the radio men pulling most of the K.P. my regular duty turn can't come every day."

"Well, that's the way I have it on the duty roster and so that is that."

The next day we drove through the Redwoods and on into Oregon. At Grant's Pass we didn't get the warm reception we had been receiving. The few people caught outdoors turned their backs toward us as we rode through the town.

We went on to Sutherlin for our night's bivouac. The natives honored us with a dance. Since I was on K.P. there wasn't any way for me to attend. Sgt. Rinke came around and said, "You have a turn at K.P. tomorrow."

"Sgt., there must be something wrong with that duty roster as this will make the third consecutive day for me to be on K.P."

"No, there isn't anything wrong with my duty roster, that's just the way it happens to work out."

Lieu came over and asked, "Sgt. Rinke. can I get a pass to go to the dance?"

"No. I want you Japanese boys to stay right here in camp."

Lieu let loose a tirade, "Slagent Linke Ylou look like mlonkley. Len le glet black tlo Slan Luis Oblispo I glonna plut ylou in clage jlust like mlonkley. Thlen I clan look at ylou all thle ttime."

Fortunately for Lieu, Rinke couldn't understand a word he was saying. In addition to the extra L's Lieu chattered fast. Those of us who were used to listening to Lieu when he was excited knew what he was saying but didn't let on to Rinke..

The last day on the road the citizens of Eugene, Oregon ran those of Grants Pass a close second for a cold reception.

At Veronica and Clatskanie the entire population turned out to cheer for us.

CHAPTER 18

Washington Maneuvers

We crossed the Columbia River at Longview and had Oregon's sunshine replaced by low black clouds that dripped incessantly.

The fourth night from San Luis Obispo we bivouacked near Winlock which was in the maneuver area.

Duane Jennings, was placed under arrest for stealing, and selling, sleeping bags and would have a special guard for the rest of the maneuver. That guard would be in addition to the regular camp guards.

Sgt. Rinke came over while I was scrubbing the pot that our canned stinking stew had been warmed up in and told me, "Gerrish, you have a four hour shift on guard duty and you will be on K.P. tomorrow."

Sgt. Blair who was nearby came over and asked, "Rinke, why are the radio men doing all of the K.P.?"

"All of the other men have their own jobs to do."

"The radio men have their own jobs too."

"Yes, but you have spare men. You should thank me for not putting your old operators on guard and K.P. You got enough without the new men."

"The new men are supposed to be learning how to operate radios and not how to do K.P."

"You got most of them. As I said you are the only section with men to spare."

"Why didn't you use the others on the trip up?"

"Because I made up the K.P. roster before we left San Luis Obispo."

"You have had Gerrish and Tebbe on K.P. every day."

"The mess Sgt. and cooks say they are the best workers."

"That may be but keeping them on K.P. is not fair to them as they should be getting experience on the radios. Tebbe is so discouraged that he is talking about leaving the radio section."

"Well, I just have to go by my duty roster."

"I sure hope that we get some company officers who will spend more time with the company instead of hobnobbing with the brigade staff officers. I see that I might just as well try to reason with a tree as to reason with someone of your intellect."

Ray Tebbe had indeed been talking to Sgt. Phillips about taking steady K.P. He would get weekends off and would be a apprentice cook. The cooks were on shift from noon one day until noon the following day with alternate days off. I didn't tell Sgt. Phillips that I had once been a cook in a CCC camp as I kept hoping that things would get better in the

radio section.

There was a fringe benefit on K.P. as we would usually have a fly over our work area to keep out of Washington's perpetual rain

The night guard shifts were four hours but we wouldn't always be relieved at the end of a shift and would have to stay on duty for eight hours. Meanwhile the rain kept pouring from the sky.

We moved camp frequently but stayed in the same area. We never knew just where we were as we didn't have any maps. Names like Winlock, Ryderwood and Bullfrog Mt. meant nothing to us as we didn't know their location relative to Longview.

We fared much better than the 80th Brigade which was west of us. One battalion of their 185th Inf. was lost in the Willapa Hills for several days. That was a blunder that the 40th Div. never lived down and old timers in the 7th Div and 41st Divisions would often remind us of it during the ensuing years in the Pacific.

On Tuesday, Aug 26 with the maneuver completed we found a CCC camp to stay in overnight. The next night we bivouacked in a muddy cow pasture between Centralia and Chehalis that we dubbed "Influenza Flats." At least we knew our location as we had looked those two towns up on a map before starting north.

Wednesday, August 28, we headed back to California. The 80th Brigade trucks and drivers would go with us with the remainder of the 80th Brigade HQ. Co. going by train.

Art Lohman, , Paul Bngeli, Red Shuchard, Lieu and I were among the riders in an 80th Brig, weapons carrier with Bill Yaffee, the driver and Jack Knill as swamper. Later, I would spend a lot of time with those two in the 40th Recon. Troop.

All of us were loaded into the carrier except Lieu who was struggling with his pack. Yaffee yelled at him, "Get in you damn Chinaman so we can get started."

Lieu got even hotter at being called a "Damn Chinaman" than he did at Rinke's "Japanese Boys." Unlike Rinke, Yaffee could understand Lieu's chatter. Lieu finally subsided enough to get into the truck but all of the way south he was either cursing Yaffee or ranting about what he would do to Rinke.."

CHAPTER 19

Going South

We crossed the Columbia River from Vancouver into Portland and left Washington's black skies and drove into Oregon's sunshine. We did wonder how the clouds knew that the Columbia River was the border between the two states.

We saw Mt. Hood with Paul Engeli saying, "What a glorious sight and we will see more snow capped mountains later."

Art Lohman, mused, "Washington sure didn't have any scenery like that."

"Oh, they have mountains as nice as that. We saw them last year when we were up here for maneuvers as it didn't rain all of the time."

The first night we were near Klamath Falls, Doodle McCarty came over and we got two hour passes to go into town. We had to walk the two miles back to camp in a drenching rain that reminded us of Washington.

We stopped for a bivouac at Willows, California. My Grandmother was visiting my Aunt Fern in Chico just thirty miles from Willows. One of the 80th Brigade men lived in Chico and would have a ride home for the evening. He told me, "We have plenty of room in the car if you want to ride over to Chico."

"Thanks, I'll ask Sgt. Rinke for a pass."

Approaching Rinke, I asked, "Sgt. I want a pass so I can go over to Chico. My Grandmother is visiting there and I would like to see her and my aunt."

"You can't go you're on K.P."

"Can't someone else do K.P. for a change?"

"You are the one on my duty roster."

"How about changing your duty roster as I've been on K.P. every day and all of the K.P.s have been from the radio section."

"The others all had work to do on the maneuver."

"Now, all they are doing is riding just like the radio men."

"Well they had it hard in Washington."



"I had K.P. every day and guard duty every night and do you think that was easy?"

"Shut up. You ain't gettin' no pass."

"Sorry, I should leave known better than to ask."

Going south through the San Joaquin Valley, the natives tried to give us melons but we couldn't get Yaffee to stop or even slow down.

The convoy continued south to Bakersfield then turned west across the Coast Range to San Luis Obispo. We arrived at camp at 1:00 p.m., Mon., Sept. 1. Unbelievable as it may sound we were allowed to take a two hour nap that afternoon.

From the maneuver we concluded that our wooden guns would do as long as we didn't get involved in the war. The tanks had been jeeps as command cars were called in 1941. The smaller vehicle that would become popular as the "Jeep" had not yet arrived on the West Coast and wouldn't until well into 1942.

We got back into the routine of yard work. Sgt. Rinke could really strut when he had a crew digging a ditch. One of the men said, "Just look at old Pinocchio, he actually thinks he is a second Napoleon."

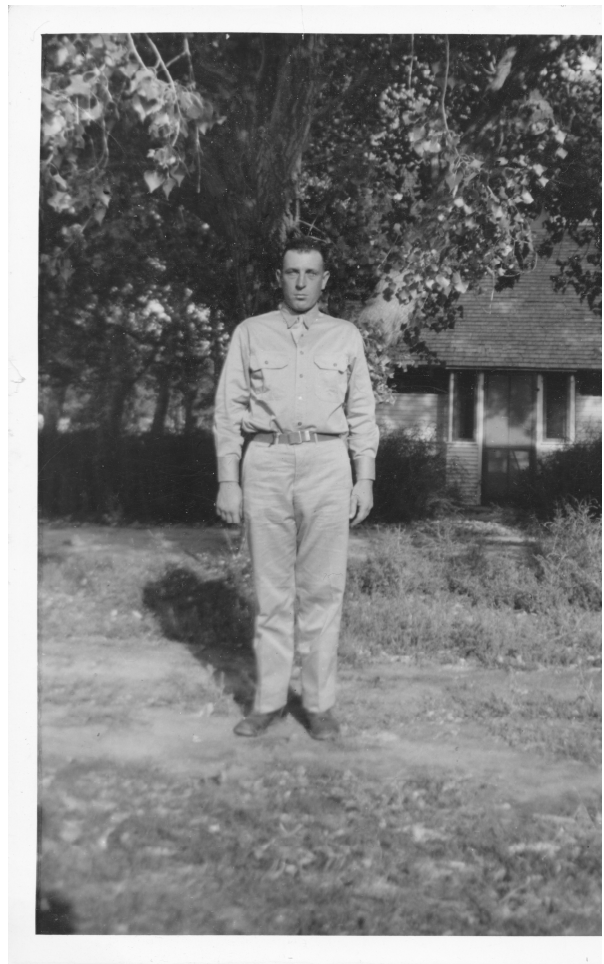
On September 19, Sgt. Rinke sent for me and when I arrived at the orderly tent he handed me a paper for a ten day furlough. I said, "But everybody else got 15 days."

"You are lucky to get ten days."

Master Sgt. Gene Parmentier from the Brigade staff was there and said, "Come, I'll walk back to your tent with you as there is something I want to tell you."

As we walked he told me, "You take the ten days and when that time is up wire me for an additional five day, I'll see that you get it."

That was my only furlough while in the army. It wasn't anything unusual or exciting but it did give me the one chance to get back and visit my family and friends.



Home for Furlough—1941

CHAPTER 20

Hunter Liggett Maneuvers

My first day back from furlough was Oct. 6 and of course my turn for K.P. came that day. A new day had dawned for the radio men and we were released from all details to attend the radio school for two hours each forenoon. That was a double pleasure as we knew that it was a great irritation to Sgt. Rinke.

When we were not on K.P. we hauled rocks and gravel to make sidewalks around the company area.

The last part of October we went on a maneuver on the Hunter Liggett Military Reservation which was fifty miles north of San Luis Obispo.

About mid-forenoon of the first day a truck driver from the 40th Division Ammunition Office approached Sgt. Rinke with an order for him to provide a laborer. With my usual luck, I was the radio man nearest Rinks and he ordered, "Gerrish, you go with this man. It will be good experience for you and lifting those ammo boxes will be good exercise and help build up your muscles."

"Gee, thanks Sgt. I'm overcome by the way you look out for my welfare."

Blank ammunition had already been issued and all other ammo was simulated. The driver and his swamper were really interested in getting another man, or two, so they could play pinochle.

The back of the six-by-six truck had plenty of room for our sleeping bags and the driver had thoughtfully brought mattresses. We didn't have to sleep on the ground and worry about rattlesnakes.

The driver was well acquainted with all of the rear echelon units and knew which had the best cooks. We managed to get to a different unit for each meal which was always provided but we did have to sign for them. That was much better than subsisting on C-rations.

The worst thing that I had to contend with was the drivers high speed over the rough trails.

Saturday, Nov. 1, was the last day of the two-week maneuver and I went back to the company that morning. Rinke greeted me, "I see you made it back. Did they give you a good workout?"

"They sure did Sgt. My back feels like a truck ran over it.

After all of that back-breaking work I should get to take it easy today."

"Of course you can have it easy. This M.P. needs someone to work with him as a guide and you are selected."

Going with the M.P. to a road junction we stood there for the rest of the day with traffic signs hanging on us. A post would have sufficed to hang the signs on but that wouldn't have been the army way. A nice woman did stop and give us some fruit.

Late that, night we got back to San Luis Obispo with another maneuver behind us and it was the easiest and most enjoyable of any I was on during my army days. It wasn't until I was with the 40th Recon Troop and off from under Rinke's thumb that I told him what my two week's duty with the division ammunition office was really like.

In November the 40th division started to reorganize from a 22,000 man to a 15,000 man unit. The brigades would be eliminated.

As a part of the division reorganization the 159th Infantry was detached and sent elsewhere. My old friends, Walt Huff, Bill Ledford, Lynn Hull and others went with the 159th,

If I was losing old buddies I was gaining new ones.

CHAPTER 21

On Pass With Buddies

Paul Engeli, the big blond Italian, had a car which was a rarity for a soldier in 1941. He asked Art Lohman, the tall corn and hog farmer from Illinois, and me to go to Atascadero with him for a Friday evening of fun. With nothing better to do I said, "Yes. I'd like to see what Atascadero has to offer."

In the Atascadero Park we saw three young women sitting at a picnic table. I suggested, "Let's go talk to those girls as they might just be looking for three soldiers."

As we approached I asked, "Pardon me but can you tell us where the theater is located?"

One pointed and said, "Yes, it's right over there."

"Thank you. Do you live here in Atascadero?"

"No, we just came up from Los Angeles for the week-end."

I introduced myself and the other two to the women.

The woman who had been doing the talking introduced herself saying, "I'm April and this is May and that's..."

"That must be June," I interrupted. "No, her name is Maria"

"Do you have any special plans for the evening?"

"No, we just arrived and were sitting here talking about what there might be for us that would be fun."

"Where are you staying?" Art asked.

"In one of those cabins." April said as she pointed.

"Gee, Gosh, are they big enough for three beds?"

"Why do we need three beds?"

Engeli offered his bit, "Well if you were going to have overnight company it might be nice to have them."

May spoke up, "Our boy friends will be here any minute now and mine is extremely jealous so you fellows better run along to the movie."

Out of hearing, I turned to the other two and asked, "Why don't you guys at least get half way acquainted before you start asking women to share their beds with you?"

Art answered, "Oh. I didn't mean nothin' like that. All I was tryin' to do was make conversation."

Engeli said. "That's all I was trying to do. Do you suppose that's why they asked us to leave."

"Yes, and the sad part is both of you are telling the truth about making conversation."

CHAPTER 22

To Los Angeles For A Weekend

On Friday, Nov. 7, Red Shuckard and I got week-end passes to go to Los Angeles. Red wanted to visit his folks and I wanted to see Lola Wilson, a girl I'd met in San Luis Obispo during the summer.

On the way to the train station, Red suggested, "Let's buy first class instead of troop tickets so we won't have to ride in the Jim Crow car."

After buying our tickets we started to board the train with the conductor blocking our way and saying, "You soldiers will have to go to the fourth car back to board."

Red answered, "We bought regular first class tickets instead of the troop rate tickets so that we wouldn't have to ride in the Jim Crow car."

"You still can't board this car. We have people on this car. We can't let soldiers mix with people."

"We may not look like it but we are also people so let us on your train."

"You can get on. Just go back four cars."

"That's your Jim Crow car and we paid regular fare so that we wouldn't have to ride with the tramps.",

"I'm not going to let you on here."

"We are not going back to the Jim Crow car."

"If you don't want to ride with the rest of the troops and the working class people you just are not going to get on this train."

We finally gave up and went back to what the conductor called the troop and working class car. We never could get a refund for the difference between the cost of the tickets although we tried at Los Angeles and again when we returned to San Luis Obispo.

It was my first week-end pass and I did enjoy the brief time in Los Angeles. Sunday evening came all too soon and I met Red at the train station. Once again we were not allowed to board any car except that of the troops and working class.

CHAPTER 23

November Confusion

A team of recruiters came from Fort Ord to recruit radio operators to go to the Philippines. Paul Engeli and Dale Boughner were the only ones to express an interest in going. They made a trip to Fort Ord and returned full of stories about all of the radio equipment they saw.

Later Red Shuckard told me, "Those two were probably shown one new, shiny piece of equipment. They are the type that would drool over it and ask if there was more. The officer in charge would tell them that there was a lot more neglecting to say that the rest was mostly picks and shovels."

"Red, you know the army too well."

"It's just my experience speaking."

Boughner and Engeli left and we were informed that more would be selected in about a week since there wasn't even one more volunteer from the company.

November continued to be hectic. Rumors were rife that the men not selected for the units going to the Philippines would go into a mechanized reconnaissance unit. Only the very bold or the very stupid wanted any part of a recon unit. On the other hand the situation in the Philippines and indeed all of the Orient was getting to look mighty shaky.

Sgt. Blair departed with Omer "Gumshoe" Tomson, being promoted to radio chief.

Sgt. Lang left the company with Sgt. Irving being promoted to communications chief.

Reveille was before daylight and overcoats and shoes had become the unofficial uniform for that formation. We would go to bed wearing our long-johns with our shoes and overcoats ready to go. We would ignore the first call and stay in bed until Sgt. Rinke blew his whistle for reveille. We would then leap out of bed into our shoes and put our overcoats on while we were running out to the formation.

Eight more men were selected from the radio section to go to Fort Ord to prepare to go to the Philippines. Soon another notice went on the bulletin board stating that seven more would be selected. Another list beside it showed the eight men who were eligible.

The section chief, Sgt. Tomson, was exempt. Elmer Bosman and Red Schukard both had disability discharges pending and were also exempt. Art Lohman, didn't have the required code speed and wouldn't be eligible

The next morning the list of radio operators selected was posted on

the bulletin board with my name being the one left off. I felt lucky to have missed the overseas assignment as there wouldn't be any chance for those who went overseas to get a discharge when their time was up but rather they would have their army time automatically extended.

None of those men got to the Philippines but all were on their way on Dec. 7. Those beyond Hawaii returned to Honolulu and those still east of Hawaii returned to San Francisco.

We were finally getting Wednesday afternoons for organized recreation with ours usually swimming at Avila Beach.

Rinke. had finally reworked his duty roster to apportion the K.P. equally. When the radio operators were on K.P. they were released two hours each forenoon for code practice. Most afternoons we went out with the mobile radios with Art Lohman, and I spending a lot of time operating them as we didn't know how long Bosman and Shuckard, who were more experienced, would be around.

Thanksgiving Day was November 20. We had a turkey dinner with the turkey being big enough for each man to get a small slice.

I had moved into a tent with Bosman, Lohman, , and Shuckard thus getting away from the overbearing PFC Mabbott. The tents had board floors and were equipped with oil heaters so that we were comfortable during the cool evenings and mornings.

November was behind me at last and it ended on a happy note with that week-end pass. Two week-end passes during the same month would have been just a crazy dream such a short time before. Then, too, I'd been on K.P. only a couple of days due to Rinke.'s new duty roster. I'd been the lucky one to stay while the others headed for far-away islands. Yes, my cup runneth over as December came.

CHAPTER 24

December And War

The first week of December was normal but passes were canceled for the first week-end. At noon on Saturday it was announced that there would be overnight passes. I went into San Luis Obispo that afternoon of Dec. 6 to do my Christmas shopping.

Sunday morning Elmer Rosman and Art Lohman, went to churches in San Luis Obispo. Red Shuckard and I went to the nearest chapel which was at the 184th Infantry since the 159th had departed

After church services we walked back toward the company area with Red saying, "It sure looks like Franklin wants to get us into a two ocean war."

"Well, Secretary of Navy, Knox, says our fleet can defeat the Japanese Navy in six weeks."

"Don't you believe it. I doubt that the navy is in that much better shape than the army."

"Yes, you could be right and I've been in the army nine months now and haven't even seen a tank."

"That's what I mean and Franklin does so much saber rattling."

"Maybe somebody should tell him how ill equipped we really are."

"He must have sense enough to know that. Sure do wish he were like old Teddy who advocated Speaking softly and carrying a big stick."

"He is a different kind of Roosevelt all right."

The other two men arrived at the tent about the same time that we did. Bosman turned his radio on and tuned it to a program that was comparing the help of the United States to that of Canada in the assistance of Britain's fight against Germany and Italy.

The program was interrupted with the news of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor with Art Lohman, saying, "They sure do want to do something to dramatize that program."

Bosman answered, "Art, I really don't think that was part of the program. I think it is the real thing which means Rosy has finally got his wish and has the country in war. We will be in war in two oceans and not much to fight with. Oh, but the going will be rough."

It was about 11:00 a.m. when we heard the news of Pearl Harbor. Since we knew that the army was desperately scraping up all possible men and material to send to the Far East the sudden plunge into war didn't surprise us. The surprise was that the Japanese could strike such a powerful blow at Pearl Harbor as we were expecting the action to start in the Western Pacific.

Noon came and we went to the mess hall for dinner. Sgt. Rinke shrilled his whistle and announced, "You will all remain seated after you finish eating. Captain Planning, has something to say to us."

Captain Planning, told us, "We have to be ready to move out by 2:00 p.m. in accordance with the 4th Army's plan to protect the West Coast. The 40th Division will be deployed from Los Angeles south to the border. We will be going to San Diego. You will take arms, combat packs and bedrolls. The rest of your gear will be put in a barracks bag and turned into supply."

We had just completed preparations when Sgt. Omer "Gumshoe" Tomson, came in and told us, "Gerrish, you are going with me as the radio operator and Lohman, you will be the command car driver. We have to leave right now."

"How come you are taking the two new operators and leaving Red and me?" Bosman asked.

"Sorry, but I have to take men who can drive and work around the clock."

Bosman with his 20-200 vision could not see well enough to drive. Red Shuckard had failed to pass the physical exam for Officer's Candidate School and had proved that he didn't have the stamina for the 18 to 22 hour days expected from the radio operators. Both had pending disability discharges.

As we approached the motor pool, Sgt. Hawtry, motor pool chief, said, "You men are supposed to stay here and help us grease trucks. Someone will call you when it's time for you to go."

We messed around with the already well greased trucks until 4:00 p.m. when Sgt. Tomson, got the order and a half hour to prepare for departure. I was sent to the kitchen to get some rations and was told to make some sandwiches as the cooks were all busy packing food for the rest of the company. I made a dozen baloney sandwiches and put them into a box along with a slab of cheese, box of crackers, apples and bananas. I put the box in the back seat of the command car which was getting full with our rifles, bedrolls and packs.

All trucks that the division could muster and all of the Greyhound buses that could be chartered were used to move the division. Our command car was on convoy control as we drove south during the night. We arrived at San Diego about 8:00 a.m. Monday tired and ready for some sleep. What dreamers and it would be more than two weeks before we would get a good night's sleep.

CHAPTER 25

The Early War Days

When we arrived in San Diego, Sgt. Tomson, , Art Lohman, and I along with the command car were loaned to a makeshift anti-sabotage unit and would work from San Clemente to San Ysidro.

We would help set up road blocks when there was reason to believe that enemy aliens were trying to get to the Mexican Border. We spent many long, weary hours watching small boat docks and investigating strange noises and mysterious lights.

For two weeks and two days we chased up and down the coast on the highway and on side roads. Sleep was rare and came in the form of short cat naps. After the rations we brought from San Luis Obispo were consumed we were told to go to any army unit we could find and sign for rations. We found that the army had a monopoly on cheese and crackers. When there was a variation it would be baloney and army field bread.

There was much confusion with the military and law enforcement agencies. The FBI had a list of enemy aliens and was trying to get them into custody. They needed all of the help they could get but it seemed like we spent our time running in circles

We were well into our second week and it was near midnight when we got a message from HQ saying, "Find a quiet spot and rest until 6:00 a.m."

We pulled onto a side road leading, down to the ocean and parked the command car in a pasture a few feet from the road. Since I'd had the last catnap it would be my turn to take the first two hours on guard and radio watch. I got out and paced back and forth by the car for two hours with the only thing breaking the silence the snores of Art and Gumshoe. At 2:00 a.m. I awakened Art to take the next turn.

Flopping into the back seat the next thing I knew was Art pulling on my leg and saying, "Come out and look once."

"Is it six O'Clock already?"



San Diego—1942

"No, it's just five after two."

"Then I just went to sleep so leave me alone until six."

"How could you get to sleep so quick? Now come out and look at the lights once."

"What lights."

"Those lights down at the beach and out in the ocean."

Crawling out of the back seat I stood beside Art and looked toward the ocean.

"Now, there they go again. Look straight down and a little to the right," Art directed.

"Oh yes, I see flashes now. Looks like someone is flashing a light out over the water and there are answering flashes. We better awaken Gumshoe as that ex-detective will like this."

Sgt. Tomson, was sleeping in the front seat and responded to Art's shaking with a sleepy, "Oh, is it four O'Clock already?"

"No, it's a little after two but we want you to look at some lights once," Art told him.

After watching briefly, Gumshoe turned to me saying, "You are the radio operator so you'll have to stay here while we go down and investigate. Get a message off to HQ."

As Art and Gumshoe shouldered their rifles and started down the trail, I climbed back into the car and picked up my flashlight with the blue cellophane over the lens and wrote a brief message. I received instructions to report every half-hour.

It wouldn't be possible for me to stay awake sitting so I got out and started to pace back and forth over the path I'd worn.

The flashing lights ceased soon after Gumshoe and Art left. I continued to pace, look and listen. Twice I made the half-hour reports and was getting, ready to make a third when I heard Gumshoe whistle. I answered with one clap of my hands. As the two approached I asked, "What did you find?"

Gumshoe answered, "We searched all of the cabins and scared the daylight out of some Chinese who were sleeping in one. Whoever was doing the signaling was gone or well hidden by the time we got down there. Maybe it was just some woman letting her lover know that the way was clear for him to come for a visit."

I made the report to HQ and we were rewarded with another assignment fifty miles away.

Art got behind the steering wheel and Gumshoe took the radio saying, "I'll take care of the radio so you can get some sleep."

"Coffee, I could sure use some coffee," I heard Art say as I drifted

off to dreamland.

That night wasn't really much different from the others we went through during those two weeks and two days.

CHAPTER 26

To The 184th Infantry

It was Dec. 21 when Sgt. Tomson, , Art Lohman, and I reported to our old friend Sgt. Hughes, radio chief, of the 184th Infantry Reg. HQ. Co. Hughes took one look and said, "Just pitch your pup tents and get some sleep."

The 184th was bivouacked a few miles northeast of San Diego. It was mid-afternoon when we rolled into our steeping bags. We didn't awaken until breakfast time the next morning. We got the day to get more rest and to get ourselves cleaned up.

The following day Sgt. Tomson, went back to the 79th Brigade HQ. Co. while Art and I were told that we would be loaned to the 184th until further orders.

My rest was over and I went to a hilltop radio station until Christmas morning. Back at the 184th HQ there would at least be something to eat besides bologna sandwiches.

The cooks served a good Christmas dinner which we ate outside in a drizzling rain. The men were in good spirits as it had been announced that the company would move to Miramar in the afternoon. We would be at the racetrack where we could use some buildings for shelter.

Art and I did not stop at Miramar as we took a sack of bologna sandwiches and went with another radio operator "Candy" Cain, to set up a radio station near a dam. We were provided with a rat infested shack that was partly over the water of the lake.

With a deep canyon to work out of we spent the next two days trying antennas in different locations and at different angles before we finally made contact with the 184th HQ station.

With the radio station on the air, Sgt. Jimmy Dyer brought two men from the wire crew for guard duty and left Art and Candy to run the radio. He took me back to the Miramar HQ where they were short of radio operators.

At Regimental HQ I got a twelve hour shift on the radio. I had the day shift for a couple of days and then went on the night shift.

I started the new year of 1942 by pulling the twelve hour night shift. The HQ station was always the busiest with most of the radio traffic at night.

Sgt. Hughes liked to move the radio operators frequently as he said that made it less monotonous. It was Friday, Jan. 9, that he told me, "Tomorrow you go down to Palm City with K Company, but first Captain Sullivan wants to talk to you and Lohman, ."

Captain Sullivan pointed to two chairs and said, "Sit down men."

As we took the chairs, Captain Sullivan remarked, "Of course you know my brother Dick who is an enlisted man in the 79th?"

Art who was an impulsive talker always let me be the spokesman if we were talking to an officer so I answered, "Yes Sir, we know everybody in the company."

"That really isn't the reason that I had you come to see me. How do you like being here with the 184th?"

"Sir, I like the company."

Art told him, "Sir, this is a lot better than being around Sgt. Rinke and his details."

"Sgt. Hughes tells me that you are both good workers and get along well with the other men. As you know the brigade HQ companies are going to be disbanded so you will have to go to another unit soon. How would you like to be transferred to the 184th?"

We both told the captain that we would like to be transferred into the 184th.

"I'll send your transfer applications into Division HQ." Captain Sullivan told us as he ushered us out.

At Palm City, K Company was bivouacked near the outskirts of the town. The radio station was on a hill west of Palm City and overlooking the ocean. It was about fifty feet from a barbed wire fence that marked the Mexican Border. I would go up to the radio for eight hour shifts and then spend the next eight hours off duty back at the company bivouac. During the week I was there I managed to get a four hour pass into San Diego.

After the week at Palm City and another week back at Miramar with Regimental HQ I went to Sunset Cliffs with two other radio operators named Gordon and Knight. We each had to take a four hour shift on guard duty plus a four hour shift on the radio each night. During the day we each



Knight, 1942

Photo taken by Paul Gerrish

had a four hour shift on the radio. We could take turns leaving on a four hour pass in the afternoons if we weren't so tired that we had to spend the time sleeping. I went into San Diego once.

Breakfast was delivered to us each morning in big 5-gallon thermos containers that almost kept it warm. Besides breakfast, the truck brought bologna sandwiches for our other two meals.

Dick, a four year old boy who lived in the neighborhood, was visiting us one morning when our breakfast was delivered. That morning we got fried eggs, which was always a rare treat in the army. Dick asked, "Arn't you going to cook your eggies before you eat your eggies? We always cooks our eggies before we eats our eggies."

The second week of February I returned to Miramar and stayed overnight before going on a three day pass to Los Angeles.

That was a great three days in Los Angeles. I saw Lola every day and had time to get out to San Fernando and to visit an amusement park at Venice.

Back from my mini vacation, I went back to Palm City for a week of eight hours on and eight hours off shift. Once again I managed to get a four hour pass into San Diego.

Back at Miramar, Sgt. Hughes said, "Get a good night's sleep as tomorrow I want you to take a turn in a patrol car and as you know that is night work and you will be awake all night."

The patrol car duty didn't happen as the next morning which was Feb. 25th Sgt. Hughes sent for Art Lohman, and me about 11:00 a.m. When we approached Hughes he said, "You men have to get your bags packed as we have orders to take you back to the 79th Brigade HQ. Sgt. Dyer will take you in and you will leave here about 1:00 p.m."

CHAPTER 27

Balboa Park And The 40th Recon

The 79th and 80th Brigade HQ companies were bivouacked together in Balboa Park. We said an almost tearful goodbye to Sgt. Jimmy Dyer and went into what passed for an orderly room. We introduced ourselves to First Sgt. Jarmon of the 80th Brigade who was the First Sgt. for the two companies with Rinke relegated to a minor role. Sgt. Jarmon showed us to the back room where he introduced us to our old C.O. from San Luis Obispo days, Captain Planning, .

The captain directed us to two chairs and then told us about the reconnaissance troop that was being organized. He spent a half-hour telling us about the organization and work of a reconnaissance unit.

The dictionary gives the same meaning to the English word scouting and the French reconnaissance. However, the WWII army did not use the words interchangeably. Scout units were those that sneaked around and tried to get information without being heard or seen. Reconnaissance units were those that depended on movement and firepower rather than stealth to get the desired information. Discovery or non-discovery by the enemy was usually incidental although there were times when they would deliberately try to draw fire in order to get information about placement and quantity of enemy weapons.

Both Art and I well knew what reconnaissance meant. We also knew that at that stage of WWII a recon unit needed 100% replacements for every ten days in combat. By the end of 1943 when the 40th would be considered ready for combat the life expectancy would be as good as that of other combat units due to more intensive training and better equipment. But in the early part of 1942 we could not foresee that.

When the captain finished his sales pitch he said, "Every man in the 40th Cavalry Recon Troop will be a volunteer."

Both Art and I were quick to say, "Sir, I don't want to volunteer."

"You have already volunteered."

Art was speechless and I quickly said, "Sir, there must be some mistake as I didn't volunteer. In fact I was talking to Captain Sullivan about my transfer to the 184th and he assured me that there wouldn't be any problem."

"There is no mistake. Division has canceled your pending transfer to the 184th since you volunteered for the recon."

"Sir, I did not volunteer for the recon."

"Oh yes you did."

"Sir, I wanted to stay with the 184th and never even heard of the

40th Recon until now."

Captain Planning, pointed to a roster and said, "Both of your names are right down here as volunteers."

"Sir, I see we are what might be called shotgun volunteers."

"You might put it that way but you are volunteers."

Turning to Art I said, "Well it looks like we are volunteers whether or not we want to be so there is no point in continuing this discussion."

"It sure does look like we are here for better or worse and I'm sure going to miss the good old 184th and my friends over there."

We were assigned a tent with Red Schukard, Al Carlson, and Hal Nelson. Carlson and Nelson were in a radio operator training program.

Sgt. Irving had been promoted to communications chief after the departure of Sgt. Lang and told me, "We were going to give you a specialist rating but couldn't as you had applied for a transfer."

"Thanks for remembering me. You know it was more than two months after the men who held the ratings left before that transfer application went into division HQ."

"That's right but we didn't promote anyone during that time as we wanted to see what was going to happen."

When I saw Sgt. "Gunshoe" Tomson, I asked, "Are you going to be the radio chief for the 40th Recon?"

"No, I'll be transferred as there will be just one line Sgt. in communications and I'd rather take a transfer than a demotion."

When I got a chance to talk to Red Shuckard I asked, "Who is going to be our chief?"

"Sgt. Sola from the 80th and he doesn't know doodly which is the reason why he is available. All of the other sergeants in both the 79th and 80th said they would take transfers instead of a demotion to the cavalry rates."

"Well, with all of the equipment Captain Planning, says the recon will have it looks like the position should be master sergeant."

"You are thinking infantry. I think you will find that all of the, non-com ratings are lower in cavalry units."

"What your status?"

"I'm still waiting for the disability discharge as the army still insists that I'm not physically fit to be an officer where I could take it a lot easier."

CHAPTER 28

The Reeking Recon

My first full day with the 40th Recon was Feb. 27 and by a strange coincidence my turn for K.P. duty came up that day making me wonder if the unit shouldn't be called the 79th. It also made me want to be back with the 184th where those working shifts didn't have to pull details.

Sgt. Jarmon came through the mess hall and stopped to talk, "You will be working with the 40th Signal Company except when your turn for K.P or some other special detail comes up."

"Did Sgt. Rinke dust off his old duty roster and give it to you?"

"No, but we don't have many privates so names do come up often."

"And here I was silly enough to think that being a radio operator and on shift work would get me out of those details."

Ray Tebbe was nearby and spoke, "Hey, look at me I came over to the kitchen as steady K.P. last August and I'm second cook now. Why don't you take steady K.P. and see how soon you get promoted?"

"Thanks, Ray, but I should get a rating any day as I was told that there are lots of ratings and only a few operators."

The next day I went out to the Mt. Helix radio station where Sgt, West who had been one of the instructors at the division's radio school was in charge.

Sgt. West showed me around the radio room where an operator was on duty and to a smaller radio in a tent about 200 feet away where another operator was on duty. West explained, "You will take a four hour shift on each radio, then a four hour shift on guard and then you will be off the next four hours before you start the cycle again."

"You mean we work twelve hours and get just four to sleep?"

"You might get to sleep a little if nothing comes up. It's a bit rough and I have to pull those same shifts. I've asked for men for guard duty and more operators but my pleas fall on deaf ears. We do have plenty of rations as long as you like bologna sandwiches, crackers and cheese."

The radio and sleeping rooms were adjoining without a connecting door so we had to go outside from one room to the other. One night when I left the radio to awaken my relief I returned to find that a drawer had been pulled open and the papers strewn on the floor. I reported it to Sgt. West who asked, "Was anything missing?"

"No, the only things in there were the signal operating instructions, procedure book and message pads. They are still there."

"Well, maybe you had the drawer open and bumped it on your way out. We really don't have anything around here to interest a spy."

"We know that but do they?"

The next night when Sgt. West returned from awakening his relief somebody dashed out the door and down the hill. We started carrying our rifles every time we stepped out of the door.

My name came up for K.P. on March 5 so I had to return to California: and as a bonus there was a good night's sleep.

After the day on K.P., I spent the next two days operating a wire telegraph before going back to Mt. Helix and the long shifts.

The next day back at Balboa Park was March 13 and I did get a couple of hours during the afternoon to visit the zoo.

Things had been happening with the recon. Captain Ramsey, came from the 40th M.P. (Military Police) company to be the new C.O. of the recon. Since the division M.P.s were having their number reduced he brought an entire platoon with him. Ramsey, started transferring the non-cons out and promoting his M.P.s to the vacancies.

After the one day, I went back to Mt. Helix and stayed until March 27 and that was my last tour of duty there. Back at Balboa Park I got a pass to go into San Diego that evening.

On March 28 the 40th Recon moved out to La Mesa and set up a bivouac near a Veterans Civilian Conservation Corps Camp. Captain Ramsey, informed us that he was going to start to make a cavalry unit out of the collection of men.

Most of the former non-coms had departed and were replaced with M.P.s. We thought them an arrogant lot with two exceptions, First Sgt. Brandt was a fair man and a heavy-set young corporal, Alex MacKenzie, was well liked.

Among other men who had joined the 40th Recon was my old acquaintance Cowboy Walter David who had been with the 115th Combat Engineers since leaving Camp Roberts the previous June.

Sgt. Keyes was our new communications chief. He and a dozen other men from the medics had spent a few weeks in a radio school. If the departing Sgt. Sola didn't know doodly then our new man, Sgt. Keyes, didn't know a half-doodly.

Red Shuckard was among those who were transferred out and I have never heard from him or anything about him.

The weather was hot and the grass around La Mesa was turning brown. Since we didn't have any equipment except our sidearms the training had to be basic. We had close order drill, calisthenics, obstacle course, route marches and of course pick and shovel work.

One day Art Lohman, came to me saying, "Let's go to the P.X. at the CCC camp once. They got lots of things and I'll treat you to an R.C."

"Well, I really don't know just what an R.C. is but if you want to treat I'll sure try it."

"If you haven't had an R.C. you just don't know what you have been missing."

"Sounds fantastic."

We walked the half-mile to the P.X. and Art ordered two R.C.s. They turned out to be Royal Crown Colas and while they were 16 ounce bottles for five cents and reasonably cold I didn't think that they were as special as Art had led me to believe.

We didn't stay too long at La Mesa and on Monday, April 13, we moved up to Burbank in the San Fernando Valley and set up another tent camp in a park.

We got a contingent of men who had taken the condensed seven weeks basic training at Fort Riley, Kansas. Some of them had gone through the training twice and were acting non-corns for the repeat performance.

CHAPTER 29

On Pass With Art

Friday night came and I started to leave camp on pass when I heard Art Lohman, say, "Wait up once and I'll go to town with you."

"I'm not going to town. I have a date with Lola."

"At least we can ride to town together. Boy, it sure would be nice to have a girl friend."

"Well, you have to get out where the girls are if you want to meet them. Lola did tell me that I could bring a friend for her twin sister, Lela."

"Is Lela purty?"

"She's more beautiful and personable than Lola."

"Then how come you didn't pick her."

"I met Lola first."

"Well, I guess that maybe I could go along with you for this once. What should I do?"

"Be friendly and don't talk too much about that Illinois farm as they are city girls and don't understand farming. Above all don't start asking them about sleeping accommodations like you and Paul Engeli did with those girls at Atascadero."

At the girl's home, I introduced Art to them. Art said to Lela, "You girls shore don't look like twins with Lola's red hair and your's brown and you taller. I have twin sisters back in Ill-noise."

"That's nice Art. How old are your sisters?"

"Well now, they were confirmed just last spring."

"How old are they?"

"Well now, I am the oldest in the family."

"How old are your sisters?"

"My brother, George, is next younger than me."

"I asked you the age of your sisters."

"Well now, just wait once. I've got another sister named Leola."

"No, no I asked the age of the twins."

"Well now, they are getting along well in school. I think they are in the fourth grade but it may be the fifth or sixth."

"Art, don't you know the age of your twin sisters?"

"Dammit, I've got ten brothers and sisters. How in the hell do you expect me to know how old all of them are?"

Turning away from Art she looked at Lola and said, "Lola, don't you think it's time for us to get ready for our appointments?"

"What appoint... Yes, I think we should get ready. Paul, you will excuse us, won't you? You were supposed to come tomorrow night."

"Oh no, it was to... Oh, all right. I must have got my days mixed up."

"Yes, you must have. The movie we wanted to see is tomorrow night."

"I'll be looking forward to tomorrow night and seeing you and the movie."

Lela offered, "I'll be two hundred miles from here by this time tomorrow night."

We took our leave and started to walk toward the bus stop with Art saying, "Those girls are just as purty as Jersey cows, but why do you spose Lela got her dander up just because I didn't know my sister's age?"

"You could have told her you didn't know a half hour earlier."

We didn't have long to discuss the matter as a car made a U-turn and stopped beside us with a woman's voice asking, "Do you soldiers want a ride?"

Seeing two women in the front seat, I asked "Where are you going? Yes, we would like a ride."

"Just hop in the back seat for now and then we'll discuss where we want to go."

After pushing Art in and climbing in after him, I introduced us. They introduced themselves as Mabel, the talker, and Helen, the driver.

Helen said, "We are school teachers and Friday night is our night to go out and have a good time."

"What do you like to do for a good time?" I asked.

Art chimed in with, "Now back in Ill-Noise when I was in the sixth grade we had this one teacher that..."

Mabel interrupted, "This is Friday night and we are interested in fun and not in school."

"What kind of fun would you like?" I asked.

Art said, "Now just wait once I want to tell them about that one teacher that..."

Again Mabel interrupted, "This is Friday night and we want to forget school and do something for fun."

"We'll be happy to help them forget about school and have some fun, won't we Art?" I answered while elbowing Art sharply.

"Now, you just wait once I want to tell them about that one teacher..."

For the third time Mabel interrupted, "We have been in school all week and we would really like to forget about school and do something for fun."

Turning to Art I said, "Art, let's be gentleman and help them forget

about school and have some fun. If that story is so important to you I'll listen to it later."

"Well now you just wait once I want to tell them about that one teacher back in..."

It was Mabel who interrupted Art the fourth time, "Pardon me but this is where we turn off."

They stopped and let us out of the car miles from our bus stop. Turning to Art I asked, "Aren't you ever going to learn anything. Those teachers picked us up to help them have some fun and you ruined it by trying to tell them one of your stories."

"Well, it wouldn't have hurt them to listen once. There's an A&W I'll treat you to a root beer."

CHAPTER 30

Burbank To Fortt Lewis

At La Mesa one of my tent mates was George Buck who was 220 pounds of surliness when sober and a real bearcat when intoxicated which was frequent. At Burbank, I was unlucky enough to get into the same tent with him again.

When the Fort Riley men arrived we got Santoro, a loud-mouthed New Yorker, and Warren Leap a first class jerk from Brooklyn. The two were good buddies which was fortunate for them as everybody else tried to avoid both. James Fauntleroy Hayes said, "I live in fear that I'll run into those two in town and I just don't want anybody to find out that I know them."

For training, we continued our pick and shovel work. If nothing else we would be expert ditch and trench diggers.

The good part of our stay was that I managed to get some kind of a pass nearly every evening. That helped to make up the scarcity of passes before the Burbank days.

All good things come to an end and our stay at Burbank ended on April 28 when we boarded a train for Fort Lewis, Washington. What a difference a year had made in the troop trains. Instead of going onto a sidetrack for everything including the section cars the troop trains had priority over most other rail traffic.

We arrived at Fort Lewis the morning of Thursday, April 30, and were assigned to a tent camp. We were issued canvas cots, mattresses, pillows, and sheets. In Southern California we got the cots but not the other items. The tents were heated with smoky coal stoves, with the coal being of the lowest grade that would burn.



Fort Lewis, 1941

We had left southern California's summer heat for the cold and wet Puget Sound Area and didn't know whether to call it winter or early spring. The first thing we had to get accustomed to was slogging through the mud.

The army did scrape up some well used scout cars for our training. The radio operators went to the division radio school for two hours most

forenoons for code practice. However, most of our training consisted of tramping over the wooded hills. I was happy to see that the hills were not as high and steep as those at Camp Roberts. It was announced that there would be a liberal number of weekend passes from 1:00 P.M. Saturday until midnight Sunday.

We had laundry service but it was so poor that I still tried to do most of my own laundry. Since I had a monthly argument with the captain about a barracks bag of clothing and bedding that I had left at San Luis Obispo and never recovered it didn't help to have the laundry lose a third of my clothes. Each month we would go through the same procedure when the captain would send for me and say, "Here is a statement of charges for you to sign."

After looking at the statement, I'd answer, "Sir, those are items that I left at San Luis Obispo and they were never returned to me and therefore I'm not responsible for them."

"If you don't sign the statement of charges you won't be allowed to sign the payroll."

"Sir, then I won't sign the payroll as I'm not going to pay for something that I didn't lose."

When it came time to sign the payroll nothing would be said and I'd sign it but we went through the same scenario every month through August.

CHAPTER 31

A Weekend Pass With Art

Saturday at 1:00 p.m., I went to the orderly room and picked up my weekend pass which would be good until midnight Sunday. Art Lohman, a weekend pass clutched tightly in his fist, came over and said, "See, I have a pass too so let's go to Portland."

"Let's you go to Portland and I'll make the shorter trek to Seattle."

"Oh come once, it'll be fun hitch-hiking to Portland."

"Art, it's been just two weeks since we went on pass together down in Los Angeles."

"That's right and didn't we have fun?"

"Yes, if you call irritating my girl friend's sister until they threw us out fun."

"Well, yes, that Lela did get sore because I couldn't remember my sister's age. We sure had fun after we left them."

"Yes, those two school teachers looking for some soldiers to have fun with picked us up and you insisted on telling them a story they didn't want to hear until they, too, gave us the heave ho. Do you call that fun?"

"Well, it wouldn't have hurt them to listen to my story once. Anyway, after we left them we stopped at A & W for a root beer,"

"Oh yes, that was some fun. I'm going to Seattle."

"Oh, come you'll enjoy the sights in Portland."

"Yes, especially those wearing skirts."

"Oh, we can just look at the sight and forget about chasing women."

Art kept coaxing until I consented to go with him. We easily caught a ride from Fort Lewis that lasted until the man turned off the highway at a tavern just south of Tumwater.

We stood there for a half-hour trying to thumb a ride. Art made a sudden dash across the river road to a car that had just parked on the shoulder. Soon he waved me over and as I approached said, "Paul, these women will give us a ride to Seattle."

"Good, that's where I wanted to go in the first place."

The women introduced themselves as Ruth and Alice. Ruth said, "We stopped here to get a beer before going on to Seattle."

"All right, come over to the tavern and I'll treat."

"No, that will take too long. Just grab a six-pack and we'll drink it on the way."

As I returned with the beer Alice got out and moved to the back seat saying, "Put your buddy in front with Ruth and sit back here with me."

Knowing that Art, would have preferred to share the rear seat with

me and ask Alice to move back to the front. I quickly shoved him into the front and got in beside Alice. Art hugged the door as we made the start north while drinking beer.

Alice broke the ice, "I've been teaching school in Longview and my sister, Ruth, came down to take me to Seattle for the summer."

"Oh great, I've always had a weakness for schoolteachers."

We had to replenish the beer in South Tacoma and again as we got through Tacoma. With the heavy traffic and beer drinking it was dinner time when we got to Midway so we stopped at a restaurant to eat.

Art started to sit in the booth but I grabbed his arm and pulled hard saying, "No, Art, we seat the ladies first."

Ruth and Alice sat on opposite sides with me sitting beside Alice leaving Art no choice but to share the other side with Ruth which he did by sitting gingerly half over the edge of the seat. Ruth slid over toward him and teased, "See, I'm not driving now so I can cozy-up to you."

After the waitress took our orders Art, without excusing himself, went over and sat at the counter until the food was served. He returned to the booth to eat but wasn't too comfortable.

As we neared Seattle, Ruth told us, "We go to West Seattle but I'll go far enough out of the way to let you out near the railroad station."

"It would be nice if we could spend the evening together," I suggested to Alice.

"Yes, I'd love that but this is Ruth's car, she is driving and we are going to her home. Your buddy and Ruth just don't beat on the same frequency."

"The main part of town is north of here," Alice told me as we said our goodbyes.

Art and I found South Jackson Street and reasoned that it had to be a north-south street and since we had arrived from the south we must be headed north. We found out about Seattle's odd street nomenclature later.

As we walked east on Jackson asked Art, "Why didn't you warm up to Ruth? We could have spent the evening and possibly the night and the weekend with them if you hadn't acted like a burned out fuse."

"Well, you had the one that was as purty as a Jersey cow. That Ruth sure did talk something awful."

"We are talking about dating women not about buying livestock. Now just what did Ruth say that was so dreadful?"

"Back there in the restaurant she said, 'I have to go to the can.' Boy, when that Alice comes fresh I'll bet she'll be able to supply enough milk for twins with some left over for the pigs."

"Art , , that is downright vulgar. Wouldn't you rather have Ruth go

to the can then to let fly on the floor? Art, I think your big problem is that you try to compare women with bovine creatures."

"Well I don't know what a bovine creature is. Just what would you want me to do with that woman? Would you like that I should go exploring to see how green is the valley?"

"It certainly wouldn't be any worse than comparing her to a cow."

"Paul, we should be in the main part of town by now."

"Agreed, let's go ask somebody where we are."

"All right, let's go into that restaurant. I'm hungry and want a hamburger. "

"If you hadn't been so afraid of getting raped you would have made out with your supper."

"Oh, I et it all but now I'm hungry again."

We went into several restaurants with Art asking for a hamburger. Finally, Art blew his stack and shouted at the waitress, "Where in the hell are we? Are we in the United States or China? Here I come into restaurant and order a hamburger an' you just stand there with a silly grin an' say, 'Sorry, we don't have hamburgers but we have chop suey.' Where can I get a hamburger?"

"Be careful Art or you'll burst a blood vessel," I cautioned.

He shouted, "No! I won't burst a blood vessel. Chop suey, chop suey. When I heard chop suey I thought of hog feed and when I saw it I knew dam well it was hawg feed."

Turning to the waitress I said, "Never mind him. We have been walking north from the railroad station and would like to know how much further it is to the main part of town?"

"If you have been walking from the station you have been going east. The avenues are the north-south streets. You will have to go back to the station and turn right."

We retraced our steps and started north on first Avenue. Seattle still didn't look too impressive so we went over to Second Avenue which was at least much quieter. We finally found a hotel where we could bed down for the night with Art still hungry as he hadn't obtained his "hamburger."

Sunday morning Art who was a devout Catholic went to Mass at St, James Cathedral and I went with him for my first visit to a Catholic church. Little did I know that I would meet and marry a Catholic woman, convert to the church and be confirmed in that same Cathedral some ten years later.

After church Art , headed for the USO (United Service Organization) dragging me under protest. I said, "Art, let's not waste time at the USO as that's a place to go when there just isn't anything else."

"Come once, we'll just be there a few minutes."

Art went to a desk and talked to a young woman. He returned to me saying, "You sure are lucky. I've got us fixed up for the day."

"Yes, I saw you talking to that doll. Tell me, do we have dates with her and her girl friend?"

"Now you just wait once. Oh, here comes the other feller."

"What other feller?"

"Just wait once and you'll see."

Soon I was on a trolley with Art and the other feller who turned out to be an impulsive talking clod hopper who had been fitted with G.I. shoes and wound up in the 185th Infantry. The three of us were going out to a suburban home to visit some people who were willing to share their Sunday dinner with three dogfaces.

After two bus changes we arrived at the place where we met a man and his wife and a young woman named Louise. Louise was a blonde in her early twenties.

Windy Willis, the clod-hopper, managed to monopolize most of the conversations with Art managing to crowd in some words of wisdom about hogs, corn and hay. The drinks were adequate and the food excellent so I managed to endure.

On the bus back to Fort Lewis Art asked, "Now, you did enjoy the day, didn't you."

"Not exactly, I would have liked a chance to talk to Louise but you two dryland farmers bored her stiff with all of that talk about animal husbandry lore and grain raising methods."

"Well, she is pretty busy anyway. I heard her tell Willis that she had a date every night for the next two months."

"That was the only words the poor girl got a chance to utter and she would have told you the same thing. It was quite obvious that she wasn't the least bit interested in what you two windbags were talking about and what do you think she might have said to someone who could talk about something besides flatland farming? You two pig herders never gave her a chance to tell you about her interests. Is she a college girl? What does she work at? What are her likes and dislikes? Was she a relative or just a friend of the host and hostess? Was she there to meet a soldier? You pea-pickers just didn't give her a chance and I couldn't break in with you impulsive talkers going at her full speed from each side."

"Do you mean that you would have liked to talk to that snob?"

"I'm not the least bit convinced that she is a snob. You two corn-pickers would turn just about any girl off with all of that talk about the farm. In fact you do such a good job turning the women off that I don't

have a chance when I'm with you."

"Well Paul, I just don't know what would become of you if I didn't look out for you."

CHAPTER 32

Fort Lewis In May

We were in the tents two weeks before moving into barracks. The barracks had decked bunks and most of us didn't consider the barracks an improvement.

John Mason came to see me one evening and asked. "Have you heard that Sgt. Keyes is being transferred?"

"No. I haven't heard any news."

"Well, he is and a new communications chief will be selected from the radio operators. Who do you think should get the job?"

"I would rate you first, me second and Niemeyer third with none of the others even close to being qualified."

"That's the way I have it figured and I don't especially want the job as it is a line Sgt. and the same grade as T-4. As I see it there will be a lot of extra work and responsibility for the same pay. Neimeyer is going to talk to Captain Ramsey, and you know how the old man likes brown nosers. Oh, I would take it if it were offered but I'm not going to lose any sleep over it and I'm not going to talk to the captain about it."

Niemeyer was named communications chief with Mason being transferred out of the troop.

I had to say goodbye to my friends in the 184th Inf. as the regiment was transferred to the 7th Division. They would train for desert warfare then participate in the Aleutian Island Campaign. Later they would be in several Central Pacific Campaigns.

Doodle McCarty transferred into the air force before the 184th left Fort Lewis,

Several times I asked for a transfer but could never get the approval of Captain Ramsey, .

With all of the marching and other footwork my feet started to bother me again. Urged by a lieutenant and a couple of non-coms I took my aching feet on morning sick call.

When I finally got in to see the doctor he asked the usual, "What's your problem soldier, was your outfit going on a twenty mile march?"

"Sir, my feet hurt."

"Soldier, I can't see them through your shoes."

After removing my shoes and sox the doctor looked and came up with a diagnosis, Mmm, blisters and fungus."

"Sir, that's not all. They feel like they are coming unhinged at the joints."

"Hmm, that might be weak arches and we can't do much about that."

"Sir, I'm getting complaints from both officers and non-coms about not being able to keep in step while marching."

"Hmm, why don't you get a job where you won't have to do as much marching?"

"Sir, I'd be most happy to do that but unfortunately I'm in the army and therefore, unable to seek other employment."

"Hmm, you could talk to your commander about the possibility of transferring into a mechanized unit."

"Sir, I'm in a mechanized unit and we do more marching than I ever did in the infantry even during basic training."

"Hmm, what's your specialty, Soldier?"

"Sir, I'm classed as a radio operator."

"Hmm, that shouldn't require that much marching."

"Sir, we march to radio school each morning. After two hours there we march to where the rest of the troop is training and there may be much more marching during the day."

"Hmm, Soldier, I'm going to give you something for a foot soak and some powder for your socks. Be sure to keep your feet dry."

"Sir, we don't have overshoes to wear in this mud."

"Hmm, well do the best you can and change your socks and shoes two or three times a day."

"Sir, with the quantity of sox the Army issues I'll be lucky to change two or three times a week."

"Soldier, you just do the best you can. Next."

"Sir, thanks a lot for your help."

When I reported back to the orderly room I was sent to the kitchen to spend the rest of the day on K.P. That was common practice to send those going on sick call to the kitchen for K.P. Mess Sgt. Beck wouldn't take the men with colds so they were given other details.

Captain Ramsey, , like so many other army officers, liked to discourage men from going on sick call. The system worked as it usually took an order from their platoon leader to encourage men to see the doctor.

Once again infantry non-coms were upgraded with the squad leaders being upgraded to sergeants and most others going up one grade. In the cavalry the squad leaders remained corporals and there was no upgrading of any non-coms.

CHAPTER 33

Summer At Fort Lewis

In June I started to go to the 115th Cavalry's Radio School on a time permitting basis. They offered training, in higher code speeds than the 40th Division facility. Like always, the training that the troop had scheduled was the determining factor on whether the radio operators would be released for their training.

We started a daily, instead of sometimes, run over the obstacle course. I always went at about the same speed as Porky Hall who was five-foot-two in all dimensions. None of the others would help Porky through the ditches and over the walls so I always gave him a hand. We always managed to limp in just ahead of the goldbricks.

Lola kept writing to tell me how much she missed me. She told me that if I didn't come back to California soon she would come to Washington. She talked of getting work in Seattle or Tacoma.

There was no hint that she was serious about another man so it was a surprise to get a letter with Lola Paulson instead of Lola Wilson on the return address. I asked myself, "Is this her idea of a joke?"

Opening the letter I read, "I hope you don't mind too much. Chris is a pilot in the air force and I've known him for a whole month."

I understood, Chris was there and I was more than a thousand miles away. Then, too, a pilot in the air force had far better prospects than a private in a cavalry recon troop.

It was February, 1943 when I heard from Lola again. Chris had died in a training accident. She said, "If we can just pick up where we left off I'll come right up to Washington to see you."

After pondering for a couple of weeks I wrote her, "There are several reasons why we can't return to our previous relationship. One is that I'm no longer Stateside having departed Oct. 2, 1942. Two is that you have not proved to be very trustworthy in the past and I really wouldn't expect any improvement in the future. However, if you are still available when I get Stateside again and if the lovely nurse in Seattle proves as unfaithful as you we can discuss our status."

Lola wrote to me occasionally and it was late 1944 when I received another letter from her saying, "Since you did not come home when you had eighteen months overseas I assume you are staying because of your own choice. Johnny Tatteau is a marine and I love him very much but you keep in touch and if something happens I'll consider you again."

I didn't take the time to answer that letter from Mrs. Lola Tatteau.

Meanwhile back at Fort Lewis, it was around the first of June 1942,

that I met Bessie Bowen of Seattle who was a registered nurse. I saw her just about every week-end until we left Fort Lewis in August.

Our training continued without any great change through June. Those week-end passes to Seattle continued to be a welcome change from the army routine. July continued in the same manner.

Pill Moran, one of the radio operators, told me, "I hear that the troop is at long last going to give out the technician ratings to the radio operators."

"It seems as though I'm always last to hear a good rumor and I think they have been holding up those ratings far too long."

"Don't you think that we should talk to Captain Ramsey, about getting one of those ratings?"

"I don't really feel the need to talk to him although I know he just loves those who want to get their noses brown. He does have all of the records and since Niemeyer is about to depart that will leave me as the only radio operator who has passed all of the qualification tests. In view of that I'm certain to get a T-4 if not communications chief."

"Well maybe you don't need to talk to him, but I'm going to pay him a visit."

"If you feel that you should then you had better do it."

On Tuesday, July 28, I went to the hospital with my bad feet. It was Tuesday, Aug. 4, when the doctor finally examined me."

After the examination he said, "Soldier, there is nothing we can do. Arch supports would probably help and you can try some if you want to buy them."

"Sir, the army is supposed to provide everything that I need."

"We don't provide arch supports."

"Sir, where can I buy them?"

"You will have to get a pass and go to Tacoma during the week."

"Sir, I'd have to have orders from you to get a week-day pass."

"No you don't just tell you commanding officer. You'll go back to duty at noon today."

"Thank you, Sir."

When I got back to the troop I discovered that a number of things had happened during my week's absence. The technician ratings had been allotted but I didn't get one. Whether it was because I was in the hospital or because I didn't go crawling to Captain Ramsey I never knew.

Captain Ramsey had left and Captain Bassford, from the 115th Cavalry was our new commanding officer.

Captain Bassford's first official act was to trade ten of the trainee radio operators to the 115th Cavalry for ten fully qualified operators. One

of them, Sgt. Vic Stout, was the new communications chief. Since I'd met Sgt. Stout in the 115th's radio training center I knew that he was well qualified for the position.

Saturday, August 8, I got a pass to go to Seattle for the afternoon and evening. That would be my last pass from Fort Lewis as we were preparing to depart for Camp Stoneman, California and on to islands in the Pacific.

CHAPTER 34

Camp Stoneman In August

It was early forenoon on August 13 when we arrived at Camp Stoneman which was south of Pittsburg, California. The camp was sweltering hot in August with the only shade being that provided by the buildings.

Camp Stoneman was called "Farewell USA" by the local people as it was a staging area for the army units being sent to the Pacific.

I was assigned a cot in the corner of the barracks next to Dick Drake one of the radio operators from the 115th Cavalry. The 115th was a Wyoming National Guard unit. Dick was from Guernsey which was not too far from my home territory in Western Nebraska. Dick was a tall, dark haired, intelligent man in his early twenties. He was by far the best radio operator that I ever worked with. I noticed that when someone would say something he didn't agree with that he would just look at them a few seconds and then say, "Oh, you think so, do you?"

By evening when Dick said, "Come on Peegee let's go to the movie." I felt like he was an old acquaintance.

During the summer of 1942 I was always placed in the rear rank and one of the middle files when we marched. In that position I could limp along without throwing the entire unit out of step.

The first morning at Camp Stoneman, I was in the rear rank and also in the rear file as we marched to our designated training area, about a half-mile from the barracks.

We had just arrived at the training area when Captain Bassford, called the troop to a halt and ordered, "The trooper without his cap report to me."

Ed McFarland reported to the captain who asked, "Where is your cap trooper?"

"Sir, it's back in the barracks."

"Suppose you just double time to the barracks and get your cap and then double time back here."

We started to march again and the captain ordered, "To the rear march."

Instead of being unseen in the rear rank I was at the right front where I had to maintain the cadence for the entire troop. We hadn't taken more than a dozen steps when the captain ordered. "Troop halt. The trooper on the right front report to me."

Having just seen McFarland sent to the barracks on double time, I really didn't know what to expect. As I approached the captain he asked,

"What are you doing on duty? Why didn't you go on sick call?"

First Sgt. Brandt answered, "Sir, he has been on sick call several times during the past three months but hasn't been helped."

Captain Bassford, turned to me and ordered, "Go to your quarters and stay there today."

There was no order to wash windows scrub floors or any other menial task. Unlike his predecessor and so many other army officers Captain Bassford, didn't believe in punishing a man who was physically unfit for duty.

Next morning I was ordered to report for sick call. At the dispensary it was obvious that the doctor had been contacted as I was sent directly to the orthopedic section of the post clinic.

At the clinic an orthopedist examined me and said, "We can help you but why didn't you ask for treatment sooner?"

"Sir, I have asked for treatment several times but since this is the army when a private goes on sick call with something that isn't bleeding he is considered to be goldbricking and is dealt with accordingly."

"We will give you some heat treatment and therapy. I'll give you an order for a new pair of shoes that can be made into corrective shoes by inserting wedges."

I started to spend the first two hours of each forenoon in the clinic. The rest of the day I would participate in the troop's training if it wasn't marching. If the training consisted of marching I just stayed in the barracks.

September 3 the 40th Division departed for Hawaii. I was one of those left behind as there was not enough room on the ships for the entire division.

CHAPTER 35

Life With The Casuals

Fifteen men from the 40th Recon were left with the rear element. Eleven of the men had just joined the troop at Camp Stoneman and were new recruits without basic training. Others were Glenn Laperie, Bob Melius, and George Wharfield. Wharfield had just been released from the hospital where he had an appendectomy. One more, "Weepy" Lenell, who had been at the mechanized armorer's school in Kentucky joined us during the first few days. The sixteen of us were kept together in Casual Company No. 1 but several would be transferred before we rejoined the troop.

Casuals, not to be confused with casualties, are men who belong to a unit but for some reason have been temporarily separated from their unit. They remain casual until they are able to return to their own unit or are transferred.

The men of the 40th Division's rear detachment were marched to the parade ground and organized into 15 casual companies numbered 1 through 15 and each with about 200 men. Later with men returning from hospitals, service schools, leave, and AWOL, another company which was numbered six and one-half was formed.

Our commanding officer in Casual Company 1 introduced himself as Captain Hardman, and marched us to our company area. He halted us in the company street and announced, "The first order of business will be to appoint some acting non-coms. If any man shows any one of them any disrespect by word, deed or look I'll prosecute him. So help me God I'll prosecute him."

Laperie and Wharfield were appointed acting corporals by virtue of the fact that they stood at the right ends of two of the squads that were counted off.

Cooperider from the 160th Infantry was appointed acting first sergeant. Coop was a first-class goof-off and would help and teach all others in the finer points of goldbricking. He was good enough to fool the casual officers as he remained acting first sergeant of casual company 1 for the three months I was in it.

After appointing the non-coms, Captain Hardman talked to the company, "You will be on work details or drill eight hours each day. Six hour passes will be available evenings and 24 hour passes on week-ends."

Each morning I went to the clinic for therapy on my feet. The first morning Captain Hardman growled, "What's your problem, Soldier?"

"Sir, I spend the first two hours of each forenoon at the clinic for

therapy on my feet."

"Every morning?"

"No Sir, just week days."

"Is that absolutely necessary?"

"Sir, that's the therapy program the orthopedist put me on and he wants me to continue this week and next week. You can call the clinic and ask if they still think that it's necessary."

"Soldier, that won't be necessary. You just go on over but I do want to see you back here at ten minutes past ten on the dot."

After the first morning the captain would just say, "All right you go on over to the clinic."

One morning when I was in the sick call line Captain Hardman gave a suspected goldbrick a severe tongue lashing and sent him back to his work detail. He then turned to the next man and asked, "What's your problem, Soldier?"

"Sir, I have crab lice," the soldier quavered expecting to hear several minutes of verbal abuse.

Captain Hardman banged his fist on the desk and shouted, "Soldier, that's reason enough. It's no disgrace to get them but it's a disgrace to keep them."

Hiram Wellman, a young six-footer from West Virginia, had some business in town that had to be taken care of during a week day. Hardman gave him a pass from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. At the gate the guard refused to let him through saying, "We don't honor anything except six and twenty-four passes."

Back in the orderly room Hardman growled, "All right, I'll go them one better and make the pass for six hours but just between you and me you had better be back here by 5 O'clock."

On September 16 our company left Captain Hardman and Camp Stoneman and went to Camp John T. Knight at the Port of Oakland where we would work as longshoremen.

We were attached to the 45th Quartermaster Truck Regiment for bed and rations. We did have separate barracks but the cooks were quartermaster troops.

I'd been fortunate in getting into units with good cooks but, that changed at Camp Knight. The only thing we could eat was the bread and butter. I would go to the Post Exchange and stock up on my old standbys, cheese and crackers. Our pay had been increased to \$40.00 per month but that still didn't allow us to live too high.

We worked the graveyard shift and unloaded pineapple the first few days. The union had a rule that their workers could pile the boxes ten high.

That ruling didn't affect the troops so we had to pile them in pyramids fifty cases high.

After the pineapple we unloaded a train load of cement that the civilian workers refused to handle. It was difficult to understand why they kept the civilian longshore force when they wouldn't do any work.

The quartermaster troops were notorious for their looting so we were allowed to leave a guard in our barracks during working hours. I got the duty one night and had to keep pacing the floor to stay awake.

A guardhouse near our barracks was a pen made of ten foot high chain-link fencing. In one corner the bunks were decked on piling with a roof over each stack making them look like rabbit hutches.

One afternoon we saw a guard inside the enclosure with a jammed riot gun. One of the prisoners was trying to attack him so he clubbed the gun and chased the prisoner back a few steps. He then tried to unjam his gun with the prisoner closing in again so that he would again club his gun to drive the prisoner back. The performance was repeated a number of times with the other prisoners sitting on their bunks like big black vultures cheering the attacker on with such statement as, "Get him man, get him. Don't let him get away man, and take his gun man, take his gun."

Finally, another guard arrived to rescue his fellow guard thus ending the entertainment.

One of our men, Thomas, was brought back to camp late one night for being drunk and disorderly. Taking Thomas to the guardhouse, the M.P. told him, "You are going in there for the night and if you want to come out alive in the morning you had better forget words like black and nigger."

Our acting platoon sergeant was Wayne Fugate. One night when we were unloading pineapple one of the civilian guards approached Fugate about a case of pineapple that had been broken open with some cans missing.

Fugate assured him, "My men wouldn't do anything like that as they have been instructed to leave the cases intact."

The guard suggested, "Let's walk around and check."

Approaching a group of men Fugate asked, "You men haven't been stealing any pineapple, have you?"

One tall blond man from Georgia swallowed a mouthfull and answered, "No, we haven't been into the pineapple. Personally, I just can't stand the stuff."

The guard wasn't entirely satisfied but finally left when he failed to find the evidence. I never did hear how the open cans were disposed of so quickly.

My sister, Lucile, was visiting my Aunt Fern at Chico, California and I managed to get a 24 hour pass from 10:00 a.m. Sunday to 10:00 a.m. Monday to go see them. Hitchhiking to Chico and back didn't leave me much time for a visit but I did have three hours with them. That was the only pass I had to see any of my family before going overseas. At that I fared better than most men in the 40th Division as unlike most other units they did not give the men furlough opportunities before shipping out.

On Sep. 30 we went back to Camp Stoneman and were told that our stay would be brief.

We were away from our units and couldn't be paid. The Red Cross came to the rescue and loaned us money interest free. I was grateful for the loan but most of the men thought that it should be a gift instead of a loan and panned the Red Cross.

One man, Punchy Hasch, he of the crooked nose and golden glove background, sat down to write a letter saying, "I'm going to tell the folks back home not to support the Red Cross."

I asked, "What is the stationary that you are using, Punchy?"

"Why it's Red Cross stationary, of course."

"Don't you think that if you are going to tell them that the Red Cross won't do anything for you that it would be more believable if you used some other stationary?"

"Well. I ain't got nothin' else. You got any other that I can borrow?"

"No, I'm using Red Cross stationary and I wouldn't think of badmouthing the Red Cross on it."

"Well, I ain't got nothin' else so I'll just have to use this."

"Do as you like, Punchy."

Most of the complaints that I heard about the Red Cross during my army years were much like Punchy's complaint.

CHAPTER 36

The Jane Addams

October 2, 1942 was my twenty-sixth birthday and we were up early to board the huge trucks, designed to haul horses, that were used between Camp Stoneman and the Bay Area for one last time.

Our ship was the Jane Addams one of the hastily constructed Liberty Ships on her maiden voyage. We shouldered our barracks bags and marched up the gangway with G.I. Steele saying, "They can't send me overseas as I'm non-combatant."

Legs Maddox told him, "Don't look now, G.I. but I think this is a ship that we are getting on. Why didn't you tell the captain that you wanted to stay behind with Laperie and Thomas?"

Laperie did not live until the end of 1942. George Wharfield sent him a letter that came back marked "deceased" and not wanting to believe the first one sent another that returned in the same fashion. We never heard about Thomas as he didn't have a friend to keep in contact with him.

That first day "Legs" Maddox and I were on K.P. We reported to mess Sgt. Vile who was one of the most wretched men I have ever met. Instead of being able to watch the Golden Gate we were slaving in the galley.

At noon we served food and tea that tasted like iodine. We soon learned that the strong taste came from the troop's drinking water supply. After tasting the food, nearly all of the men dumped it into the garbage can.

Early in the afternoon I went down into a hold with Maddox to bring up a twenty gallon can of meat which was foul smelling and would have to be highly spiced. We had to get the can up a ladder which was a real ladder and not the steep stairway commonly called ladders.

We had almost worked the heavy and reeking container to the top of the ladder when I started to retch. Maddox, below me on the ladder, grunted, "I can't make it. Let the can drop."

We let the can plop onto the deck twenty feet below. I helped Maddox on up the ladder and we made our way to the head which was already crowded with seasick soldiers. That gave me the clue that our problem might be seasickness and not from the exertion of trying to get the odorous can up the ladder.

Six hours later I managed to muster enough strength to get up and take a saltwater shower. I then managed to find my berth and crawled into it where I stayed that night, the following day, and night.

The time came when I had to leave my bunk as I'd consumed all of the water in my canteen and wanted a refill. The troop's water was so

highly chlorinated that we couldn't drink it but the ship's crew had good water. We could get one of the ship's crew to fill a canteen for fifty cents. I've always wondered why the troop's water was ruined while the crew had good water in sufficient supply to sell.

We couldn't eat the food served on the ship but I had brought a supply of canned shoestring potatoes, peanuts, crackers and cheese along with a six-pack of small cans of tomato juice. At first the ship's store had a good supply of soda pop, candy and other snacks.

It was a two to three hour wait in line to get to the ship's store which was open for six hours each day. With the shortage of water and edible food the supplies started to dwindle with the price of pop and candy bars going from five to fifty cents.

With the sea as calm as a sheet of glass, the Jane Addams kept rocking and rolling. The rocking ship, nauseating drinking water, and unpalatable food made the trip something less than a joy ride.

In convoy the speed was determined by the slowest ships like our creeping, rocking liberty ship the Jane Addams.

On later ship rides we would at least have room to play card games but on that one we barely had standing room. The men from the 40th Recon remained clannish with much of the time spent visiting.

About six days out of San Francisco, Hatfield came to me and said, "There is a man looking for you to tell you that you have a turn on K.P. tomorrow. I just told him that I thought you might be at the other end of the ship."

"Thanks, and I'll sure try to keep out of his sight."

The next day one of the acting corporals approached our group and asked, "Do any of you know Gerrish?"

I answered, "Yes, he was down in his quarters just fifteen minutes ago." That was a truthful statement.

Hatfield told him, "I heard him say that he was going to get into the ship's store line." That was another truthful statement.

Wharfield chipped in, "He does like the other end of the ship."

It was nice to have friends and with their help the corporal never did find me.

On Oct. 13, the Jane Addams docked at Honolulu and shouldering our heavy barracks bags we gladly disembarked from the miserable ship. Our jubilation was short lived as we were herded into some undersized boxcars and jammed in them so tight that there was no danger of any of us falling.

We took the twenty-five mile ride past Pearl Harbor and around Barber's Point at a snail's pace. Finally, the train stopped in the middle of a

sugar cane field. We scrambled out of those oven hot little boxcars into the fresh air.

Hungry, thirsty, and with our clothes wet from perspiration we shouldered our leaden barracks bags for the two and one-half mile march to Camp Malakole. It was refreshing to be in the open air without the rolling ship under us. Despite the dust, heat, and leaden weight of our baggage there was very little griping not even from that ace of complainers, Punchy Hasch.

CHAPTER 37

Camp Ma;akole

Camp Malakole, resting on a coral flat, was a welcome sight for the weary, hungry, thirsty and footsore travelers. There would be plenty of drinking water which was brackish but potable. There was fresh water for showers which we now considered a luxury.

We had time to be assigned quarters and to get cleaned up before supper. The meal consisted of canned pork and beans, bread and coffee that we could drink. That simple meal seemed like a holiday feast after the putrid food we had been offered on the Jane Addams.

Most of our time at Camp Malakole was spent on work details. Each morning at "Work Call" Sgt. Cooperider would say, "All of those who have work details fall out and report to them."

Sometimes we would fall out and head toward where we had worked the day before even though the job had been finished. That way we could often get by without a work detail for a day or two. When we would do that Hiram Wellman and I would spend the forenoon in the library and the afternoon at the beach. If anyone asked why we were not working we would say, "We thought we were supposed to go back to that detail today but we couldn't find the man in charge."

We could get an eight hour pass, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. once every two weeks and only on week days. With those passes and the days that I could dodge work details it was the easiest time I had during my army days.

We did get a little military training. On the rifle range one of the acting sergeants didn't like the position of my feet and barked, "You won't even hit the target."

I put nine shots into the bullseye and just barely missed it with the tenth. I turned and asked, "What were you saying about the position of my feet, Sarge?"

"All right, I won't say anymore."

I finished the day with a score of 291 out of a possible 300 which is expert shooting.

A few days after our arrival at Camp Malakole, Weepy Lenell was transferred to the 25th Division which was departing for Guadalcanal and getting replacements from the 40th.

The rosters of the casualties were looked over many times for replacements. Radio operators were always in demand and all were picked except me.

"Doc" Carson and "Davy" Crockett, were our company clerks. I

asked Crockett. "Davy, why doesn't somebody pick me for a radio operator?"

"They figure someone who has been a radio operator for a year and a half and has never been rated can't be much good."

"Tell them that I always happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time when ratings were passed out."

"We don't tell them anything. We just hand them the rosters without comment."

"If you don't tell them that I'm capable then more than likely I'll eventually go back to the reeking recon."

"Those are the breaks. We do have strict orders not to make any recommendations of any kind."

October 31 came with the Red Cross again loaning us money interest free. Once again most of the men griped-about having to pay it back. Once again Punchy Hasch wrote a letter home panning the Red Cross, Yes, he used Red Cross stationary as that was all that was available free of charge.

One of the men in our company got the mumps and we went on a working quarantine **period** of two weeks. Nothing changed except we couldn't get the eight hour passes to go into Honolulu.

Punchy Hasch's wife was about to deliver their first child. Punchy would often awaken others at odd hours during the night so he would have someone to discuss the forthcoming event with. It was about 4 a.m. one morning when he awakened Bob Melius and asked, "You do think it will be a boy, don't you?"

After the blue words, Melius told him, "Punchy, you had better pray that it is a girl and that she will take after her mother instead of you. I don't know the mother but she will just have to be an improvement over you."

Thanksgiving came on Nov. 26 and I worked as a house painter in the forenoon. After a turkey dinner, I got the afternoon off.

After Thanksgiving, transfers came close together. We said goodbye to Carson, Hasch , Hatfield, Maddox and Wharfield. There was no one to grieve for the departure of Hasch but the others were good friends.

December 3 came and it turned out to be the day that I had been dreading and yet knew would come. We were told that we would leave the next day for Maui and the 40th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop.

Early on Dec. 4, we boarded a fat little inter-island steamer and sailed from Honolulu out past Diamond Head and Koko Head.

CHAPTER 38

Back To The Recon

Among those going back to the 40th Recon were Hiram Wellman, Bob Melius, Gilbert "G.I." Steele, Henry Stewart, Lester "Snag" Stimson and Wilfred Tull, There must have been a couple of others but I can't remember any other names or faces.

It was late afternoon when we docked on Maui. First Sgt. Brandt was with the truck that came to meet us. It was not a joyful reunion as we figured we had been left behind because we were considered to be expendable. All of us had been hoping to be transferred to some other unit, just about any other unit.

When we got to the troop which was near Makawao we found that there had been many changes during the three months we were away from the troop. The 25th Division had received their replacements from the 40th and the Recon was one of the hardest hit units. Most of the ex-M.P. non-coms were gone, especially the more arrogant ones.

All of the radio operators who had come from the 115th Cavalry except Bob Brown, who was now communications chief, Dick Drake and Francis See had departed. Of the other radio operators only Art Lohman, remained. That left just four of about thirty operators.

Not all had gone to the 25th. "Boots" Bullock had transferred into the air force and had been killed on Guadalcanal.

The 108th Infantry, formerly of the 27th Division, had been transferred to the 40th to replace the 184th. The 108th had been on the way to the Philippines when the war broke out and had spent the first year of the war on Canton and Christmas Islands, about 2,000 miles southwest of Hawaii.

I stopped to see my old friends, Dick Drake and Art Lohman, . Drake told me they still had most of the men who had just started to radio school at Fort Lewis and were trying to rush them through their training. Those men included Dana Barrow, the slender rebel from Virginia, Ray Benz, Onis "Tex" Crawford, Ray Greenan, Nelson Hartman, a Virginian who had conceded loss of the Civil War, Jack "Google Byes" Nolen, a dud from Tennessee, Walter Skilarski, the round, reckless, red faced New Yorker who was a lost cause as a radio operator, Sam Swartz, and Seymour Steinhardt.

Drake said, "Of course you are going to be a radio operator?"

"No, my plans are to see Sgt. Beck about steady K.P. I've spent so much time in the kitchen that I might as well get in there and be a cook. I had a chance to get in the same time as Tebbe and he is a first cook now.

In fact I would have had the edge of Tebbe as I spent some time in a CCC camp as a cook."

With the severe shortage of radio operators I knew that I would not be allowed to go into the kitchen or do anything except be a radio operator. However, I wanted them to know that I was not happy with my past experience in the troop.

After supper Dick Drake came over to my barracks and said, "Come along with me to the radio shack Sgt. Brown wants to talk to you."

"Oh, all right, I'll go over and meet Sgt. Brown before I go over and talk to Sgt. Beck about that steady K.P. Sure hope he can find a place for me in the kitchen."

I had just barely met Bob Brown and Francis See at Camp Stoneman. Those two along with Elwood Swart, radio technician, were in the radio shack. Brown said, "We are happy to welcome you back as Drake, See, and I have been keeping this station on the air twenty-four hours a day and trying to work with Art Lohman, and the new men so they can become of some use."

"Lohman operated a radio at San Diego last winter."

"I know and he would do all right in a troop net but we just can't use him in the division net. You are good enough to step right in and give us a hand."

"You might as well know that I'm not the least bit happy to be back with the troop. Oh, it was nice to see my old friends but that's as far as it goes. I still smart about last winter when I first joined the troop in San Diego. I would often be on a radio all night and K.P. all day even when they had to send a truck 25 miles to get me. With the 184th the radio operators didn't have to pull K.P. and operate in shifts on a radio at the same time. I still have hopes of getting back into an infantry HQ company. Any of the regiments would have taken me last summer, sore feet and all, but Captain Ramsey, would never approve a transfer. That is why I'm determined to try to get into the kitchen where I can get to be a cook if I have to stay in the troop."

"Yes, I know all about your problems of the past but this troop is entirely different with Captain Bassford, as C.O. As long as you are taking shifts on the radio there will be no K.P. or other details. We have about 25 radio operator ratings open and eleven of them are T-4. I know that you were the only fully qualified operator before we came over from the 115th. Drake has been telling me how you copied the press wireless when we were at Camp Stoneman. With Captain Bassford, this is a brand new ball game. We want to send a radio car to Hana where the troop keeps a platoon but we don't have enough operators for a two station net and this

station in the division net."

Knowing that all Brown would have to do to get me as a radio operator was to tell Captain Bassford, that I was qualified and he wanted me, I said, "I'll give it a try but the first time I get on K.P. I'm going to talk to Sgt. Beck Beck about taking it steady."

The rest of December was busy times as I got two four hour shifts on the radio each day with an additional four to eight hours working with the new operators. I liked the work so the time did pass quickly.

At night we kept a pot of coffee in the radio shack for the camp guards and radio operators. The first time I made the coffee I turned the hot plate on to the high position. It took the coffee so long to brew that it was thick and bitter. In the morning when See relieved me he said, "No wonder the coffee didn't turn out right as you really have the switch on low. Medium and high are the position beyond where it says high."

"That's interesting and here I thought all I had to do to run that hot plate was to be able to read English."

We had fricasseed chicken every Sunday. They were green-boned cold storage chickens but were not too bad in the well spiced sauce. Drake and I always went to late chow where he always got a chicken neck while I got the piece that went over the fence last. One Sunday as we were going toward the mess hall one of the men coming out said, "They are serving two pieces of chicken today."

Drake answered, "Good, and maybe, just maybe, I'll get something besides the neck."

"Yes, and I might get something besides the other end. There must be something between those two extremes."

We walked past the cooks with our messkits in the proper position with Drake getting two necks and my two pieces were both those that went over the fence last.

CHAPTER 39

Then Came January

Sgt. Brown left for officer's candidate school right after Jan. first with Dick Drake taking over as chief. I was promoted to technician fourth grade on Jan. 1 with my long tenure as a private finally coming to an end.

We had the new operators sufficiently trained so that they could operate the radios without close supervision. Francis See and I started to take four day turns taking a radio car and one of the new operators to Hana.

Since the two of us had to keep the radio on the air all night it meant just a half of a night's sleep during those four days.

The army paid for our meals in a Chinese restaurant which was no improvement over army rations. I never did get accustomed to the Chinese food, especially the undercooked meat.

On one of the tours back at Makawao, I got an eight hour pass to go into Kahului and Wailuku. Those towns were nothing like Honolulu but it did get me away from the army grind for a few hours.

We sent some new men to a division radio school at Paia. The signal company insisted that it be a boarding school because of the past difficulties of getting units to release men every day for the radio training programs. Hiram Wellman and Lester "Snag" Stimson, two of my friends from casual company days, were with that group.

At Makawao we had two radios in the same shack one in the division net and one in the troop net. That meant that two operators had to be on duty. I spent some long nights with Seymour Steinhardt. He wouldn't drink the "Tramp Coffee" that I made and he wouldn't eat the peanut butter and crackers provided for our midnight repast. He would sit and make pencil sketches of the other radio operators.

With the last day of January, I got my first pay as a T-4. With the 20% extra for overseas pay it came to \$93.30 which was almost riches for a soldier in those days.

CHAPTER 40

Troop Characters

One reasonably quiet Sunday afternoon Dick Drake and I were on duty in the radio shack when Nello Dinelli came in with a pocket bulging with pennies and asked, "Ya wanta to matcha da pennies?"

Drake didn't have any change but I pulled a half-dozen coppers from my pocket and laid them on the table saying, "I'll contribute these to your cause."

With my usual luck I lost two in short order. Drake picked up one of my pennies and said, "We might as well make it three way with the odd man winning."

"Shesa no fair two against one," Nello protested but went ahead with the matching.

Drake told him, "It's always two against one when three play."

We continued to play with Nello sometimes protesting, "Shesa no fair da two of you against one."

With the odds we finally got all of Nello's pennies with Drake telling me, "Now you have to go to the PX and got us a case of coca cola since I helped you win. We can even be the good guys and let Nello help drink it."

One of the troop characters was Old Man Mote as we usually called George Note. Old Man Mote insisted that Hiram Wellman and I come over and look at something he had. Since we hadn't been warned we walked right into the trap. Old Man Mote had procured a foot locker which he showed us with me saying. "That's a nice foot locker, Mote, where did you get- it?"

"Oh, I want to show you what's in the locker."

He opened the lid and we saw that the tray was full of bottles, boxes and cans. Lifting the tray we saw that the bottom was full of bottles, boxes and cans.

"What are you collecting, Mote?"

"Oh, I'M glad that you asked. Now this here bottle is full of swamp water that I take a swaller of when my liver gets riled up. Now the salve in this can is what I rub on the big toe of my left foot whenever it gets itself swelled. Now here is some powder that I can wet and make into a poultice whenever I get a risen."

Mote continued on through the numerous containers. Each part of his body had a peculiar ailment and each ailment had a specific cure in one of the containers in Mote's foot-locker.

Lifting one bottle Mote told us, "Now this here Georgia Spring

Water will cure those ailments that I don't know that I've got. All I gotta do is to take a swaller of it every night."

It seemed like we spent ages listening to Mote's cure and we would have probably been there yet if someone hadn't come to tell me. "Drake wants you to come to the radio shack."

Entering the radio shack I told Drake, "I was over listening to all of Mote's ailments and cures and I do want to thank you for curing me from that boring session."

Another troop character was Phillippi Perez who could speak no English but learned to write his name. He would buy insurance or do anything to get to sign his name.

Phillippi never bathed and wet the bed so he wasn't exactly a rose to be around. One of his roommates, Garling, tried to get him to clean up. When Garling came back to his quarters that evening he found all of his clothing slashed to shreds, probably by Philippi's knife.

Phillippi got a pet goat but somebody was mean enough to kill the goat. Phillippi got a piece of the goat's hide and carried it around for weeks.

We also had our Snuffy Smith who like the Snuffy Smith of comic strip fame wasn't very big or very well educated. Like his namesake all he was qualified for was yardwork.

Another yardbird was Gilbert "G.I" Steele who had been in the casual company. G.I. always insisted that he was non-combatant but we couldn't figure out what he meant by that statement.

Old Man Mote, Phillippi Perez, Snuffy Smith and G.I. Steele were finally transferred out of the troop. I never did hear where they went.

CHAPTER 41

More of Maui

Between the patrols and training exercises, I got to see most of Maui. The only part of the island I missed was the northwest from Lahaina around to Waihee. The day I got up to Haleakala Crater it was cold and foggy at the summit which is just over 10,000 feet.

In addition to the training and patrols we got in our share of drill, calisthenics and obstacle course running.

Even with the busy schedule I managed to get a pass about once each month. The passes were still week days from 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. with the only accomplishment being a change from the army routine for those few hours.

In March we got word that a cadre would be formed from our troop to return to Stateside where a new division would be organized. Dick Drake, Ray Benz, Nelson Hartman, Seymour Steinhardt and the technician Elwood Swart, were the radio men selected for the cadre.

Francis See was Drake's heir apparent to be communications chief. See was losing his hearing so Captain Bassford, started to look for someone else to be chief. I was the first one approached and said, "Since the chief is just a line sergeant there would be no promotion in pay. It's a lot more work and a lot more responsibility for the same pay. I do appreciate being considered but will have to say, No thank you."

Drake said, "If you take the chief's job you will get to be the gunner in the captain's scout car."

"I'm supposed to be the radio operator in the executive officer car now. I figure with your departure I'll be by far the best radio operator in the troop which will assure me of being assigned to the exec's or the C.O.'s scout car."

"Yes, but all of the officers want you to be chief."

"Ray Greenan or Tex Crawford should do all right."

"The others have been considered but you are the favorite."

One day Drake came back from a meeting with the officers and told me, "It's all settled and you still have the chance to be chief but if you won't take it J.F. Hayes will be the man."

"He is already liaison Sgt. so it wouldn't be any promotion for him. He knows very little about any kind of communications and nothing about radio. Do you think he wants the job, and why?"

"Yes, he will take the job as he thinks it would help lead him to bigger and better things."

"Soles, Keyes, Neimeyer, Stout, Brown, and now, you, have all been

chief's and all have gone on to better jobs. Let them give the job to Hayes if they want him on that basis."

One by one all of the operators came to me and said, "You better change your mind as we just wouldn't be able to tolerate Hayes."

I didn't think Hayes was that bad but finally agreed to take the chief's job with the departure of Drake.

It was about that time that we got some replacement operators: Herschel "Red" Butte, Bill "Blackie" Bryson, and John Long. There was another, Stotsenberg, who didn't stay with the troop long enough to get acquainted.

The men we had sent to Paia to train as operators came back to the troop. Since they had been able to devote all of their time to the radio training we got some good operators in "Snag" Stimson, Hiram Wellman and Harold Bruner. Wilferd Tull, was fair but would soon be transferred. Ray Hilton, could keep the operators seat warm.

Meanwhile we had started to train some more in the troop and they included Hal Taylor and Rosaia with both spending part of their time with the technician, Swart.

Francis See was with the patrol at Hana when we got word that he had just been pulled from the surf where a party had been swimming. At the time he was being given artificial respiration. An hour later we were informed that the resuscitation effort had been unsuccessful and he had been pronounced dead.

Military funerals were speedy and that of Francis See was just as brief but we all went to pay our last respects to our comrade.

CHAPTER 42

The New Communications Chief

Captain Bassford, left with the cadre about April 5. First Sgt. Gustafson ended his brief tenure with Alex MacKenzie taking over. My old friend, Ray Tebbe, became mess sergeant.

We had several capable lieutenants in the troop in Davis, Olsen and Starr. It was the five-foot schoolteacher from Poteet, Texas, Hugo Ernst, who was promoted to captain and made commanding officer.

The departure of Drake, Benz, Hartman, Steinhardt, and Swart left some big holes for me to try to plug. The most experienced radio operators were Dana Barrow, Onis "Tex" Crawford, Ray Greenan, Sam Swartz and plodding Art Lohman. Jack Nolen was a dud and the mule headed Walter Skilarski just wouldn't do. We had the newly acquired Bryson, Butte and Long and the new operators back from Paia. They were Bruner, Stimson, Tull, Wellman and Hilton, who could operate a walkie-talkie if someone would show him the on-off switch. Wilferd Tull, was soon transferred out of the troop. I inherited the goldbricking "Rosy" Rosaia for technician.

I met with Captain Ernst saying, "Sir, we should get some more men in training as radio operators as we don't have enough for all of the scout cars."

"Wal, you got 18 operators and 13 cars."

"Sir, eleven of those operators can handle a radio, two others can be used for gophers while the others are complete duds."

"Wal, you gotta get an idee. You gotta get on the ball."

"Sir, my idea is to get some men into radio operator training programs and to get on the ball and see that they keep at it."

"No, you gotta get an idee. You gotta get on the ball."

"Thank you sir and I will try to find a ball and get an idea."

I departed wondering why I'd allowed myself to be pressured into taking the thankless communication chief job.

In the spring of 1943 the non-cons in the infantry were upgraded again with squad leaders being promoted to staff sergeants. The communications chiefs were master sergeants and warrant officers. In the cavalry the only one affected was our first sergeant as they were made first grade the same as master sergeants. We still had the lowly corporals for squad leaders.

To add to my woes it was announced that we would start taking; some Ranger Training. Sgt. Tony Buzzini had returned from taking the full course at Schofield Barracks and would be our instructor.

"Kill or get killed" was the bitter slogan adopted by the rangers. It

was posted above the gate to their training area at Schofield. It was above their mess hall, orderly room and supply room doors. They heard it many times each day from their instructors. The slogan spread through the Pacific and to the army and marines all over the world.

The Japanese were always reluctant to surrender and nearly always preferred to die fighting. After the fall of Bataan and Corregidor Americans began to realize that the Japanese treatment of prisoners of war was extremely harsh and often resulted in death by starvation or torture. With those conditions known the Americans became as reluctant as the Japanese to surrender. Thus kill or get killed became the only choices in the Pacific War.

It was early April when we started to devote two hours each day to Ranger Training. Next, came a decree from division HQ that every man would learn to swim. As communications chief one of my several other jobs was command section chief which left me the duty of telling the others that they would start swimming every afternoon. When I told the troop clerk, L'Cainan Evans, that we were all going to start swimming that afternoon he became hysterical and shouted, "No, I just won't go in any water except the shower."

"You have orders from division HQ. The swimming is preliminary to amphibious training and the orders are to swim or drown."

"I won't swim and if I'm thrown in the water I'll just drown."

"There is a beginner's class in the pool at Paia. Will you do to that pool if I go too?"

"Oh, it would be nice to get away from the office for a couple of hours so I'll go if I can stay in the shallow end."

In addition to the shallow end there was a toddler's pool and it was there that Evans, spent that first session in water clear up to the top of his ankles.

That was the only time I was allowed to go to the pool as it was for non-swimmers and I was just a little bit better than that. Evans, did keep on going to the pool.

Months later when we were taking, amphibious training, at Waianae I got out into the water up to my chin. Some showoff made several laps around our group then with his head entirely under water. He swam over to me and then stood up treading water and asked, "How am I doing now, Sarge?"

"Evans, what have you been doing? You couldn't have learned to swim like that in that six-inch deep toddler's pool."

"Oh, I overcame my fear of water and then it was easy."

"Now I believe in miracles."

May and June continued busy as we had to keep the radios manned in addition to the heavy training schedule.

Most of the men we had started to train as radio operators dropped out of the program. It was apparent that operating a radio wasn't going to get them out of any of the other training but would just make them more work. It was often explained to us that there just wasn't room in a recon troop for men who were not fully trained to fight.

CHAPTER 43

To Schofield Barracks

About July 10, 1943 we left Maui and went to Schofield Barracks on Maui for several months of intensive training.

Meeting with Captain Ernst, I told him, "Sir, now that we are in training we should start getting some more men trained as radio operators so that we won't be so shorthanded."

"Wal, you gotta get an idee. You gotta get on the ball."

"Sir, I do have an idea and that is to get some men trained as radio operators and we should get on the ball and start tomorrow."

"You gotta get an idee. You gotta get on the ball."

"All right maybe some radio operators will fall out of the sky and I do want to thank you for all of the encouragement, Sir."

We had left all of our equipment on Maui and inherited the gear of the 24th Recon Troop as the 24th Division was departing for New Guinea.

Besides their worn out radio equipment we got one of their radio operators in Gilbert Clay Hammond who told us that he was the best in the 24th Recon. He was in the hospital with stomach ulcers when the 24th departed. It didn't take long for us to find out that Hammond's estimation of his own ability was greatly exaggerated. Actually he was on a par with the duds we already had on our roster.

He always thought that he should get special consideration such as being allowed to go out to a restaurant for breakfast at 10:30 in the forenoon. I would say, "Hammond, you are no more privileged than any of the others and I just won't let one man go without letting the rest have a special privilege. As you should be able to see, I would be the only one left in such a situation. In other words the answer is no."

I was going on a special assignment for a few days and Hammond told me, "Don't worry about a thing as I'll take charge here and keep everything in shape. I may have time to impart some of my special knowledge to the other men."

"Hammond, I have already told Ray Greenan that he will be in charge when I'm not around."

Greenan had already remarked, "We should try to find something for Hammond in line with his abilities. Maybe we could find a special broom and let him give the floor a special sweeping."

We didn't get much time for radio training and it usually came at a time when the others were training in their specialties. We had to use much of the time that we were allotted to familiarize ourselves with semaphore which could be used for ship to shore operations.

Hiram Wellman and I did get to learn the rudiments of pole climbing. There would come a time when that training would be used.

Schofield Barracks was noted for the great swarms of bedbugs. Our mattresses were run through a fumigator every two weeks. The springs of our cots were sprayed. With blow torch or matches we would sizzle the bedbugs in the coil springs. Still the bedbugs came on in seemingly increasing numbers.

We did get to send some of the radio operators to a quickie radio technician school which had been organized by the field artillery. I wanted to go but Captain Ernst wouldn't approve.

CHAPTER 44

On More Pass With Art

One of the benefits at Schofield Barracks was an occasional 8:00 a.m. to 5 p.m, pass to Honolulu. The only other passes were for 24 hours.

Not too long after our arrival at Schofield, I went to the orderly room to pick up my nine hour pass. By coincidence, Art Lohman, was there to get his pass and said, "Uh great, we can go to Honolulu together and you can help show me the sights seein' as how you have been there before."

"Art, let's share a bus seat on the way in and then go our separate ways when we get into town."

"Now wait once, we ain't been on pass together since that time we went to Seattle last year."

"Yes, and like every other pass we have been on together you queered me with the women."

"This time will be different as it's daytime and 'sides I done heard that there's a dozen white hats for every woman and a soldier just can't compete with then."

"You do have a couple of good points but I'd still like for us to go our separate ways."

"Wait once, why don't we both go where you want to go?"

We arrived at the bus stop and got seats together. I tried to point out the sights to Art although I was not too familiar with that part of the island.

Arriving in Honolulu I said, "Art, everybody gets a Honolulu haircut to start the day."

"Well, I just had one a couple of weeks ago."

"That one didn't last and you can use a new one. You haven't lived until you have gone to the Honolulu barbers."

"What's so special about them?"

I didn't want to tell Art that all of the barbers were young women who delighted in getting a bashful man trapped in the barber chair so I just said, "You'll have to find out."

Art's barber, a buxom part Hawaiian, asked, "How long have you been on Oahu?"

"We only been here about a week."

"My, but you have such a good tan, did you come from California?"

"Yes, but I've been on Maui."

"Maui? Did you get to do a lot of cat hunting on Maui?"

"No, but back in Ill-Noise we had cats around the barn. We would give them milk an' they would keep the rats away."

"Oh, but that wasn't the kind of cats I had in mind."

"Oh, what other kinds of cats are there?"

The barber bent over and whispered something in Art's ear with his face turning beet red.

My barber, a slender Japanese, asked "Are you a good French lover?"

"If you really want to know what kind of lover I am the best way to find out is to have a date with me. Let's make it right now. What time do you get off work?"

"Oh, but I couldn't go after work as I have to go home to my husband and the twins."

"If you don't want a date with me then difference does it make what kind of a lover I am?"

"You certainly aren't as shy as your friend."

"Art is a confirmed bachelor."

Art's barber finished with the haircut and managed to brush a breast across each of Art's cheeks and massage his stomach while removing the apron. She then asked, "Which would you like next your shampoo or your shave?"

I came to Art's rescue saying, "Art, I have to be to my next appointment in just fifteen minutes and if you want to go with me you had better skip the rest of the services."

As we left the barber shop Art asked, "Where are we going now?"

"We go down to Waikiki and get our pictures taken with the hula dancers."

"I don't want to do that."

"Art, you just haven't been to Honolulu if you don't get your picture taken with the hula girls."

The girls charged twentyfive cents a pose. When they saw Art was shy three of them posed with him with one tight against each side and the third one backing up in front of him and wiggling. Art's face turned beet red again.

As we left Waikiki, Art asked, "Where do we go next?"

I had heard of the brothels on River Street and how each woman took care of several rooms. They would dash from room to room scantily clad or nude. I wondered how



Paul Gerrish with hula dancer,
Honolulu, 1942

Art would react to those sights but knew that I would never get him near a house of ill repute. I said, "Art, there is a USO Club at the other end of town that we can visit and see if they have anything that might interest us today."

As we got off the bus Art asked, "Where is that USO?"

"It's right up the street," I answered not knowing just where one of the establishments was located.

As we walked, I saw a sign that read "ROOMS" and said, "There it is Art."

We started in but the 350 pound Hawaiian woman who was acting as Sergeant at Arms stepped in front of the door saying, "You can't come in."

"Why can't we come in?" I asked.

"Because you are drunk and we don't allow drunks."

"I haven't had a thing to drink, not even one beer."

"Well your buddy is drunk."

"No he isn't. We both just got into town and haven't had our first beer yet. He was just looking at those buildings across the street and stumbled."

Art grabbed my arm and pulled hard saying, "Paul, come once. Let's get out of here. This ain't no USO. This is a clip joint."

As we left, I asked, "Are you sure that is a clip joint?"

"Yes, I heard those two soldiers talking about it when they walked out. That wasn't no USO."

"Then the USO must be this other place."

"No, that there is a clip joint too."

"Then we better go up the street a little further as I was told that there is a USO around here"

"No, let's get out of here and go back to the main part of town. It's gettin' near noon and I'm hungry."

"All right let's find a place to eat but no hotdog stand. We get enough wieners back at Schofield."

"We can go get some hambuggers then. I like hambuggers."

We kept busy the rest of the day but I wasn't able to get Art near River Street again and he wouldn't go back to Waikiki."

On the bus ride back to Schofield Barracks, Art told me, "Paul, it's sure a good thing that I went with you otherwise you woulda' gone in that place that you thought was a USO and those women would have completely ruined you."

"Thanks for looking after my welfare."

That was the last opportunity for the two of us to go to town on pass

together. Thereafter all of our socializing together would be to see a movie on the post.

CHAPTER 45

Life At Schofield BarracksS

The first weeks at Schofield Barracks we concentrated on Ranger Training and were told that the amphibious and jungle training would come later.

A number of new men joined the troop and I asked if any of them were radio operators and received a negative reply.

Captain Ernst called me into his office and asked, "How is Fredrickson doing?"

"Sir, I don't know Fredrickson. Who is he and why am I supposed to know how he is doing?"

"You should know him as he is one of your radio operators."

"Sir, where did Fredrickson come from and why hasn't anyone told me that we have a new radio operator?"

"Wal, he is one of the new men who came in last week."

"Sir, since the new men have been here such a short time the ones I have met are those assigned to the command section. If the Captain will recall I asked about radio operators and was told that there wasn't any among the new men."

"Wla1, you gotta get an idee. You_gotta get on the ball."

After leaving the captain, I found Fredrickson a 6 foot 2 inch blond who looked younger than his nineteen years.

A few days later I was summoned to the captain's office and he asked, "How is Herr doing?"

"Sir, I don't have any one named Herr in my section or as a radio operator so I wouldn't know how he is doing."

"Wal, you should know him as he is one of the new men and one of you radio operators."

"Sir, if the captain will remember, I asked about radio operators when the new men arrived and was told that there wasn't any. If the captain will further recall I was told about Fredrickson a few days ago as if he were the only radio operator with the new men."

"Wal, you gotta get an idee. You gotta get on the ball."

I found Paul Herr, a slender dark haired young man who had been assigned to one of the platoons.

Captain Ernst introduced me to Bruce Moore, Jess Reitmeyer and Arnold Reisgo one by one and in the same fashion.

Sundays were always slow days in garrison. Most Sunday mornings Hiram Wellman and I went to church services. After Ronald Fredrickson joined the troop he would go with us.

Most Sunday afternoons I went to a movie sometimes with Art Lohman, Wellman, or Fredrickson. Sometimes several of us would go together. There would be a least two choices of movies on the base.

During September we went to the amphibious training center at Waianae. Most of the training was swimming and climbing cargo nets. Weighted down with full field packs and rifles we got so we could scamper up and down those nets like squirrels. It was hard work but we realized that many of the men would be climbing those nets under fire, a condition where speed would be essential.

We had to swim a mile with a buoy a half mile from shore the turn around point. I tired after rounding the buoy and started to fall behind. Supply Sgt. Bill Yaffee and Platoon Sgt. Jack Knill, the two men I'd met on the trip from Washington to California in 1941, fell back and stayed with me. The three of us just barely finished in the required time.

With amphibious training completed we went back to our Schofield Barracks training routine the rest of September and October.

In addition to the training we had various details. I had to take my turn at "Charge of Quarters" which meant staying in the orderly room at night or on week-ends. Then, too, I'd get a turn as Sergeant of the Guard. The only time we posted guards was at night so that was always night work when the mosquitoes were the hungriest.

On rare occasions there would be some reason why we would have to put one of our radios on the air and operate it for a few days.

Training for the radio operators remained sketchy. I would often ask Captain Ernst for more time and more men but to no avail.

Early in November we had to make a twenty five mile march in five hours. As section chief, I had to look at the men's feet after the march. Elmer Kiemela's feet were almost a solid blister. Remembering my own problems of the year before, I made sure that he took his sore feet on sick call the following morning.

About mid-November my left arm became swollen and red so I had to go to the hospital with my first tropical infection. I stayed in the hospital for a week with my arm in wet packs so I did catch up on my sleep. The bed bugs were just as plentiful in the hospital as they were in the barracks. By being in the hospital, I missed most of the jungle training.

Most of our Christmas packages arrived during late October and November. Knowing that we would be leaving and wouldn't be able to carry excess baggage, I had told friends and relatives not to send presents. They paid no attention and I received what seemed like a ton of sundries that I had no use for.

My Aunt Fern who was a devout Salvation Army worker sent me

one of their packages. One item in the package was a round quart that rattled. Opening the can, I found it was full of hard candy and reeked of ether with everyone nearby nearly passing out. I quickly popped the lid back on and threw the can into the garbage. Also included was a hood designed for Northern Alaska and Greenland and mittens to go with the hood.

With the Salvation Army package and those from relatives, I received three heavy wool sweaters, four pairs of wool mittens and six pairs of wool sox.

Our reveille formation was always before the faintest hint of daylight. I would look down the line and try to determine approximately the number of bodies and then report, "Command section all present or accounted for."

One day First Sgt. MacKenzie approached and asked, "Do you know where Brunstetter is?"

"No, but since you are using him for a troop clerk you might start by looking in the orderly room."

"He isn't there. He has been AWOL for three days and you keep reporting your section as present or accounted for."

"We have reveille in the middle of the night. There are no lights because of the blackout. We don't even have any moonlight. Then too, if I did notice a clerk missing I'd just figure he had gone to work early as no clerk ever stands reveille very often."

"It's all right. He couldn't have gone far and will probably be back soon."

Brunstetter did return after a brief vacation in Honolulu.

On Thanksgiving Day we did slow down enough to eat a turkey dinner.

During our last few weeks at Schofield Barracks, I managed to get a twenty-four hour pass to Honolulu. It wasn't very exciting but I did have one night in a hotel away from the bedbugs.

Never could I convince Captain Ernst that the radio operators needed more training in their specialty.

CHAPTER 46

A Cruise On The Matsonia

About December 13 we boarded the Matsonia, a converted luxury liner for a two week cruise to Guadalcanal.

Our quarters were deep in the bowels of the ship in what had once been the swimming pool. Most of us spent as much time as possible topside. Cowboy Walt David said, "We do have a choice as we can lie down like dogs up here on the weather deck or we can go below and play like we are sweltering bilge rats."

Cowboy did come prepared for the cruise as he brought a bingo set so that he could conduct bingo games with ten percent of each pot as his share.

The first grade sergeants had a separate mess with only First Sgt. MacKenzie qualifying from our troop. Every day Sgt. Mac would search out L'Cainan Evans, , troop clerk, and tell him what the first class sergeants were served for dinner.

Evans, would always reply, 'Yes, you guys eat like royalty. Do you know what we had? We had stinking-stew, that's what we had just smelly old stinking-stew.'

For two days out of Pearl Harbor the Matsonia was escorted by two destroyers. Since the ship could outrun submarines and would zigzag so they couldn't lie in wait and there was no danger of hostile aircraft being in the area the escort returned to Pearl Harbor. When we neared Pago Pago a destroyer came out to meet the Matsonia and escort it the last few miles.

We anchored in the bay at Pago Pago for about four hours and could observe the natives by using our field glasses.

We did have one good dinner as the cooks did manage to come up with a good Christmas dinner to replace the usual stinking-stew. Other than the dinner Christmas was just another day on the Matsonia.

Much of our time was spent in playing simple card games such as fantan and casino. Those games didn't require much concentration and were always the favorites.

In addition to the card playing we spent time visiting with the main topic of conversation being to speculate on where we would go from Guadalcanal. That island was being used as an advanced training base for the units staging for operations on other islands. Many thought we would go to Bougainville which had just been invaded.

CHAPTER 47

Guadalcanal

Two days out of Guadalcanal the Matsonaa was met by two destroyers. In addition to the tin cans, planes often flew out to help with the escort.

After breakfast on Dec. 27, we had just occupied our favorite place on the top deck when Evans, started to crinkle his nose and said, "What a horrible stench. Somebody must have pooped his pants."

Tex Crawford answered, "All hands must have pooped."

Cowboy David came up with the correct diagnosis saying, "Hell, that's Guadalcanal you fellows smell."

Since the odor persisted we concluded that Cowboy was right even though we were not near enough to see land. It wasn't until mid-afternoon that the ship anchored in Iron Bottom Sound near Hell's Point. Small landing craft took us to shore

Our troop was assigned a camp site just over the seawall from the beach. We set up pyramid squad tents and were issued cots.

The first night we awakened about 2:00 a.m. with water running into our cots and rain coming down in sheets of water.

The next day we raised our cots by putting blocks of coconut logs under the legs. By then we were accustomed to seeing land crabs as big as our hands and lizards the size of medium sized dogs.

I met with Captain Ernst saying, "Sir, as you know Hammond and Rosaia stayed in Hawaii. We won't miss Hammond but we will have to promote somebody to technician to replace Rosaia."

"Wal, you gotta get an idee. You gotta get on the ball."

"Sir, my idea is to promote Hal Taylor to radio technician. He is the best technician we have and he isn't very far advanced as a radio operator so we won't lose anything there."

"We can make Crawford technician. He can't see well enough to be a gunner so we don't want him in an M-8 (armored car)."

"Sir, Crawford is a good operator and we are short of operators. Taylor knows much more about the technical part and is good at fixing things."

"We don't want Crawford in an M-8 so you will have to get along with him as technician."

"Sir, if the captain insists we will have to give it a try but I still favor Taylor."

"Wal, you gotta get an idee. You gotta get on the ball."

"Sir, I understand that we have a couple of months before we invade

New Ireland so why don't we start training some more men as radio operators?"

"Wal, we just don't know how much we'll be able to use our M-8's after we leave here."

"Sir, we should have trained operators for all of the M-8's as it takes an absolute minimum of two months so that we can't run out and train them when the need arises."

"Wale you gotta get an idee. You gotta get on the ball."

"Thanks for all of your cooperation, Sir."

Crawford did not last long as technician. When the signal company saw the results of his work it was suggested that we use somebody else. We put Hal Taylor, the big loudmouthed Kentuckian in as technician and he turned out to be the best we ever had."

When we first arrived on Guadalcanal we bathed in the surf and became accustomed to dodging the sewage from the ships that were anchored in the channel. The other alternative was to go to the river and risk getting infections and parasites. We were told that the division would soon be producing filtered water for bathing.

Lt. David Starr came into the radio shack to talk about the proposed invasion saying, "We want to be able to dismount all 23 jeep radios and use them with the battery packs. Do you think we can get three sets of batteries for each radio?"

When removed from the vehicles each radio required two dry cell batteries each about the size of a six-pack of beer cans. After a few minutes of juggling figures I said, "Sir, we are authorized six sets of batteries for each radio and we can order that many each month. We haven't made a December requisition which we can make right now. We can make the January requisition about mid-month and the February requisition the first of that month. We have been getting just about ten percent of our requisitions so we might just wind up with two sets per radio."

"Sergeant, that sounds fair enough as we probably won't be using all of the radios dismounted."

It was about mid-February when a truck delivered all three of those orders which had been one-hundred percent filled. We didn't have a shortage of batteries for months after that time.

CHAPTER 48

The Arrival Of 1944

New Year's Day came and we had a roast turkey dinner. The quartermaster provided four big turkeys so that we each got a small slice of turkey meat.

Not long after the year started, Lt. Olsen approached me saying, "Sergeant, we need a radio operator for one of our M-8's."

"Sir, the radio operators are all assigned to M-8's and as I have been telling all of the officers and Captain Ernst in particular we just don't have enough operators to go around."

"There is Skilarski who is not assigned to an M-8."

"Sir, I have never accused Skilarski of being a radio operator."

"Well, Hell, he has a T-5 rating as a radio operator."

"Sir, I had nothing to do with him getting any kind of a rating as the ratings come through the platoons and I'm seldom asked if the individual is qualified. He just is unable to learn the Morse code. In fact he can't even manage a walkie-talkie."

"We have to have somebody and he has a T-5."

"Sir, take him if you want him."

Once again we worked overtime with Skilarski. We not only tried to teach him the Morse code but also tried to teach him how to turn on a simple on-off switch and how to push a microphone button. All of it continued to be beyond Skilarski's grasp. Impossible as he was as a radio operator, Skilarski did take to the turret guns. With the 37 mm cannon he could hit a barrel 1800 yards out in the ocean.

During the month of January I made another trip to what we called a hospital with another tropical infection.

The hospitals were mud floored tents furnished with canvas cots with three wool blankets plus a mosquito net for bedding. One blanket was folded for a mattress and one folded several times served as a pillow. The third blanket could usually be used for additional mattress padding or for more pillow as we seldom needed to cover up with it except for patients with chills.

South Pacific hospitals had about the same ration priority as the combat units. Tomato juice was scarce with other fruit juices non-existent. Powdered milk was not plentiful and fresh fruits and vegetables were something remembered from the dim past.

The patients, like the men in combat units, subsisted on a high starch diet that consisted mostly of dehydrated potatoes and army field bread. The bread was all right but butter and jam for toppings were rare items.

After nineteen days and well into February, I was released from the hospital with a complete understanding of why soldiers seldom walked into one of them voluntarily. Most of the men preferred to be treated by the medics attached to their units unless they were entirely too weak to get around and take care of themselves.

When I returned to the troop, the reconnaissance platoons were spending some time out in the jungle chasing some of the estimated 5,000 Japanese still on the island. They often saw signs but none of the Japanese. I do believe that the only ones captured by the 40th Division were those caught trying to steal rations who were apprehended by the cooks.

One morning I was helping the first platoon get ready to go on one of their missions. Their newly acquired radio operator, Walter Skilarski, was having problems getting his pack on properly but nearly succeeded after a number of fumbling attempts. Finally satisfied that his pack wouldn't fall off, he fell in line with the rest of the platoon. Platoon Sgt. Tony Buzzini, said, "Skilarski you better go back and get your canteen that you left on the log."

"I can't hear you Sarge, I can't hear you," Skilarski shrieked as he kept going.

Buzzini was known for his short fuse and I expected him to cloud up and rain all over Skilarski. Instead he turned to me and grinned saying, "With that guy I just have to consider the source and let the matter drop."

"Yes, Tony, and some day you will discover that he operates a radio in exactly the same fashion that he dons his equipment."

"Yes, I have already guessed that he would be about as handy as a cub bear trying to carry an armload of shelled corn."

The dampness caused a number of problems. Our laundered clothes never got completely dry. If cigarettes were not moldy when we got them they would be within a day. The matches would get soggy and refuse to light. Many of us wrote home for cigarette lighters. Art Lohman, came to my rescue and loaned me a lighter until I could get one. In a pinch we could use two wires and a battery for a lighter if we were around the radio shack.

The bushy haired natives were often hired to work for the army. I never saw one of the women on Guadalcanal but I did see men and boys. Many of the men had their normally black hair colored in various shades of red, orange and yellow.

We could hire one of the natives to climb a tree and drop the coconuts for fifty cents. The coconut water, which was never called milk in the islands, was always cool when first dropped from the tree.

The natives like to trade with pipes and knives always in great demand. Those were scarce items with us so they usually had to settle for some other item in trade for their shells.

Frank Nobile was talking to one of the natives and with his best pigeon English asked, "Joe, how you tell what day it is?"

The native looked him right in the eye and with perfect English answered, "The same way you do, Joe, by looking at the calendar."

Many of the natives had attended mission schools where they learned to speak perfect English.

Cowboy Walt David started to make his own alcoholic beverages soon after our arrival on Guadalcanal. Raisin Jack was Cowboy's favorite when he could get the raisins. When he didn't have raisins he could always come up with some vile concoction.

When a barrel of the brew was properly fermented, Cowboy and his drinking buddies would spend several days emptying it. Cowboy was from Wyoming but most of his drinking friends were from Southern Appalachia and accustomed to various forms of moonshine. They would be noisy for several evenings and everybody else would be happy when the contents of the barrel were gone.

Sundays, if our duties permitted, Ronald Fredrickson and I would go to the church services. He was nearly twenty and had left his Minnesota home for the army nearly two years earlier when he graduated from high school. Like most of the younger soldiers he had never been away from home before entering the army. They would get terribly homesick as their first trip away from home stretched on into years.

CHAPTER 49

Preparing To Depart Guadalcanal

Near the end of February ships came to take us on our dry runs. The USS Elmore took us to a remote part of Guadalcanal where we made the practice landings in preparation for New Ireland invasion. After the rehearsal we returned to our bivouac area to make final preparations while awaiting transportation up "The Slot."

The plan called for Admiral Halsey's South Pacific forces to take New Ireland with General Douglas MacArthur's Southwest Pacific Army occupying the Admiralty Islands. That would completely isolate the Japanese stronghold at Rabaul, New Britain thus rendering a costly assault on Rabaul unnecessary. The First Marine Division had already seized Cape Gloucester at the western end of New Britain and 250 miles from Rabaul.

About March 4, the ships to take us to New Ireland arrived. The 40th Division would debark from Guadalcanal and would join the 37th Division from Bougainville to make the landing. There would be no reserves which was a fairly normal situation in the Pacific War.

Men and equipment were loaded on the ships. The last night Captain Ernst kept his M-8 and crew on shore. As communications chief I was in the captain's car as gunner. Tex Crawford was the radio operator and Jack Asher the driver. Besides being car commander, Captain Ernst was assistant gunner.

We dallied until the last minute and barely had time to get out to the ship when we drove the M-8 into the LCM (Landing Craft, Mechanized).

As the LCM started to back away from the beach. I saw a soldier running toward us waving a sheet of paper. Turning to Captain Ernst, I said, "Sir, there is a man with a message for us and he acts like it is important."

The captain signaled for the barge to stop. The messenger, still waving his paper, shouted, "Come back to shore. The invasion has been canceled."

The ships were unloaded and we went back to our old bivouac area. It was several days before we found out what happened.

The departure of the 37th Division had left the Americal Division holding the perimeter at Empress Augusta Bay, Bougainville. The Japanese had cut trails from the far end of the island and picked that time to launch a major counteroffensive on the perimeter. The 37th had to be sent right back to help hold the beachhead and keep the Americal from being pushed into the sea. Those two great divisions later handicapped by

the 93rd, stayed there until late 1944 fighting off the numerous Japanese attacks.

On March 25, 1944, the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved the liquidation of the South Pacific Forces. The 25th, 37th, 40th, 43rd, 93rd and Americal Divisions were transferred to General MacArthur's Southwest Pacific Command. The 1st and 3rd Marine Division were all allotted to the Central Pacific Forces which were directly under the command of Admiral Nimitz and were accelerating their drive across the Central Pacific.

CHAPTER 50

New Britain Here We Come

Not long after the aborted New Ireland operation we were told that the 40th Division would relieve the 1st Marine Division on New Britain as soon as transportation could be provided.

It was April 25, 1944 when we arrived at Cape Gloucester, New Britain. Just one of the infantry regiments remained at Cape Gloucester as one went to Talasea about halfway up the north coast of the 250 mile long island with the other going to Arawe about halfway along the south coast. Rabaul, the Japanese stronghold, was at the northeast tip. The army estimated that 70,000 Japanese were at Rabaul. That estimation turned out to be low as 90,000 surrendered at the end of the war and that was after the Australians had what they called a "Bloody old go" at them from Dec. 1944 until Aug. 1945. Holding the Japanese force at bay was the reinforced 40th Division of about 20,000 men.



Paul Gerrish
Cape Gloucester, New Brittan, 1944

The climate on New Britain ways a very slight improvement over that of Guadalcanal.

Our bivouac was less than 50 yards from the coral reef that passed for a beach. One other remarkable feature was a smoking volcano that was visible from our area.

Soon after our arrival at Cape Gloucester, I went to Captain Ernst saying, "Sir, it looks like we won't have any important duty or heavy training so we should start a training program for radio operators. We should get some new men started and upgrade the skills of our present operators."

"Wal, you gotta get an idee. You gotta get on the ball."

"Sir, my idea is to get a radio operator training program started. With the captain's permission I'll get on the ball and start it right now."

"Sergeant, it appears that you spend a lot of time talking about more training time for the radio operators and you're always wantin' more men."

"Sir, doesn't it seem reasonable that if we do get another assignment that we should have enough well trained operators to man all of the

radios?"

"Wal, it 'pears to me that we have enough now."

"Sir we now have the likes of Hilton, Nolen and Reisgo assigned to M-8's as radio operators."

"Wal, they might do if you'd just give them radios that work."

"Sir, their radios were all right and we should concentrate on getting men who are intelligent enough to turn on a switch and plug in a microphone or key."

"Sergeant, Nolen has a T-4 am the other two have T-5s and you talk like they are poor operators."

"Sir, they ain't even that good and I just don't believe that those three and that super-dud, Skilarski, who also has a T-5 are ever going to learn."

"Wal, they got their ratings."

"Sir. I have nothing to do with who gets ratings as the recommendations come from the platoons and the first I know about them is when I see them on the bulletin board. That is another thing that should be changed as the communications chief should have something to say about who gets rated as a radio operator."

"Wal, that just ain't SOP {Standard Operating Procedure}. You just can't do it that-a-way."

"Sir, I think you should make it SOP."

"Wal Sergeant, I have an appointment so we'll just have to talk about your problems some other time."

I left hoping that we would someday get another commanding officer like Captain Bassford, .

One morning I went on sick call with a sore left heel that had been bothering me for about two months.

When the problem was explained to the doctor he said, "Just lie down on the table and I'll have a look."

At least my sergeants stripes kept me from being under suspicion of goldbricking.

After a quick look the doctor said, "That's a Plantar's wart. We will just give you an injection of novocain and excise it now."

Finishing the surgery the doctor told me, "It will be a little tender for about a week but you shouldn't have any more trouble."

Sunday afternoon we could go down to the coral reef for shells. We could get the snails out of the shells by putting them near an ant hill or by soaking them in fresh water. I used the freshwater method but it was more odorous than the ant way.

By May 10th we had a PX of sorts. We were paid in Australian money and the only place we had to spend it was the PX. We could buy

two bottles of beer about once a month. Soda pop was less plentiful. There was a sufficient supply of toilet articles and cigarettes. The purchase of a bag of peanuts was something to write home about with candy and chewing gum being unavailable.

The ration supply was not good with our main staples being army field bread and dehydrated potatoes. We no longer got the Australian mutton that had been common and unpopular on Guadalcanal. We did get fresh eggs for breakfast a few times.

In a semi-garrison situation we had the regular Saturday forenoon inspections as part of the weekly schedule. One morning a colonel from division headquarters was with the captain when the troop was lined up for inspection. Stopping in front of Art Lohman, the colonel said, "Soldier, let me see your arm."

Art dutifully leaned his rifle against his thigh and started to roll up his fatigue jacket sleeve. The colonel clarified his order by saying, "Pardon me soldier, I meant you firearm."

Near the end of May we were told that we would go to Iboki Point about 75 miles up the north coast for a one or two month stay.

CHAPTER 51

Preparations For Iboki Point

Lt. David Starr came into the radio shack with a list of materials that we were to get ready to take to Iboki Point.

The only vehicles would be two half-tracks and two jeeps. For communications we would take some dismounted jeep radios with a storage battery and battery charger for the base station.

The list included field telephones, wire, wire working tools, and our pole climbing equipment. After scanning the list I remarked to Lt. Starr. "There is no long range radio on the list. How do you propose to communicate with the outside world?"

"Captain Ernst didn't say anything about long range communications at the officer's meeting."

"Maybe it slipped the worthy captain's mind so I'd better go have a talk with him."

"You better get an idee as you might find out that it just ain't SOP and you just can't do it that-a-way." joked Lt. Starr.

"Sir, are you trying to tell me that the officers have the same problem with a little brick wall that the section chiefs have?"

"Oh, I didn't say anything like that."

Taking the list to Captain Ernst, I said, "Sir, I have some questions about this list."

"Wal, you gotta get an idee. You gotta get on the ball."

"Sir, I don't see any provision for long range radio communication on the list. Are we going to be out of touch with the rest of the world?"

"No, the signal company is sending a command car and operators."

"Sir, I would like to point out that we have M-8s with radios and men who are capable of operating them."

"Wal, the signal company operators need the experience."

"Sir, our own operators need the experience and we have fewer chances to get it than the signal company. Why doesn't the Captain tell them to keep their command car and we'll take an M-8 to Iboki?"

"Wal, it just ain't SOP. We just cain't do it that-a-way."

"Sir, for the good of the troop we should do it anyway."

"Wal, arrangements have already been made and that is that."

"Sir, it looks like we will be working with telephone lines so I'd like to add Lohman, Taylor and Wellman to the list of men. Those three have worked a little with telephones and Wellman is the only other pole climber in the troop besides me."

"Wal, we have to leave thirty men here to take care of our equipment

and those three are staying here. You got four men for the Iboki operation and that should be enough."

"Sir, If I had some idea of what we will be expected to do then I might have a better idea whether or not four men will be enough."

"Wal, we are relieving an infantry company and they have a command post with outposts a mile or more in each--direction. The phone lines are already in so that all you and the four men will have to do is to operate the message center and short-range radio station twenty-four hours a day. Your message center and radio will be in a shack right next to the command post."

"Sir, who is going to maintain the telephone lines?"

"Wal, you will do that but there shouldn't be any work to that since the lines are already in."

"Sir. I would still like to have Lohman, Taylor and Wellman added to the list of men as we never know what we might run into."

"Wal, it just ain't SOP and you just cain't do it that-a-away."

"Sir, things always look different when we get out to those places and we should be prepared."

"You are already gettin' four men to help you do next to nothin'."

"Sir, I don't consider taking care of those phone lines, operating a radio and managing a message center as next to nothing. You are giving me Tex Crawford, Blackie Brydon, Ron Fredrickson, and Snag Stimson. They are good men but these jobs invariably turn out to be much bigger than they appear from a distance so I'd still like those other three men."

"Oh no, it just ain't SOP and we just cain't do it that-a-way and so that is that."

"Sir, I do want to thank you for all of the understanding and help." as I departed feeling frustrated as I always did after a conference with little Hugo.

In the past we had problems with the way storage batteries had been handled and decided to try to devise an idiot proof method of transporting them. Hal Taylor built a wooden box to fit exactly in the bottom well of a half track. We installed



Ron Fredrickson, Paul Gerrish, Hal Taylor
New Brittan, 1944

handles on the top of the box in such a fashion that it would have to be kept right side up to be lifted by the handles. Since there wasn't another good grip on the heavy box it looked like the handles would have to be used. Next I got several sheets of white paper and a marking pencil and wrote "Storage batteries, this side up," and taped them to the top of the box.

When all was ready to load, I went to Lt. Starr and told him my concerns about the batteries. It was decided which half-track to load them into. Hal Taylor and I did the loading and as we finished Hal said, "Those batteries just have to get to Iboki right side up."

"I sure do hope so as that's all the batteries we have."

A few minutes later a radio operator came into the radio shack saying, "Sarge, you better come and look at those batteries."

Walking over to where the half tracks were being loaded, I looked into the one we had put them in such a short time before and they were missing. Sgt. MacKenzie said, "If you are looking for your batteries box it is over in the other rig."

I looked and saw the box upside down with the electrolyte dripping out and shouted, "We fixed that box so that no idiot could possibly get it upside down so what kind of a dim-wit could have done this?"

Sgt. Mackenzie answered, "We wanted the box in this other half track so I had two men move it. I should have stayed and supervised the move but I was busy and neglected to watch."

"Well, I hope those two one-eighth wits got burned good by the battery acid. You might as well unload the battery box and the battery charger as they won't be of any use."

"What will you do for batteries?" Sgt. Mac asked.

"We will have to use one of the half-tracks or do without a base station radio. We made that box absolutely idiot proof and as a further precaution I went to Lt. Starr and told him that I didn't want to load it until we were sure which vehicle it would be on and still this had to happen."

"With army privates we have to tell them what to do, how to do it, and then watch them."

"Yes, or do it ourselves which is exactly what Taylor and I did with the batteries rather than trust them to some nin-com-poop and that after making the box absolutely idiot proof."

CHAPTER 52

Iboki Point

The morning of May 25 we loaded onto some LCMs (Landing Craft, Mechanized) for the 75 mile trip to Iboki Point where we arrived about mid-afternoon.

Before the war the area had been a big coconut plantation. After two and a half years of neglect much of the underbrush was higher than a man's head. The landing beach was a little more than a mile west of the C.P. (Command Post). We called that O.P. (Outpost) one. A mile east of the C.P. and bivouac area was C.P. two.

Four cottages each about twelve feet square faced the ocean. We would use one for the message center and radio shack with the one next to it being the C.P. The other two were used for officer's quarters.

A thatched roof messhall and a similar constructed warehouse completed the buildings. The warehouse had been filled with canned salmon, five-gallon cans of dehydrated potatoes, dehydrated carrots and dehydrated beet-root.

A half-mile beyond O.P. 2 there was a native village that included families. The women were the first we had seen since leaving Hawaii the previous December.

Relics from a battle between the Marines and the Japanese were plentiful in the area. Our men frequently picked up Japanese rifles and other weapons.

We had little time to get acquainted with our surroundings as we had been there less than an hour when the telephone line to O.P 2 was reported out.

Leaving Crawford and Bryson, to continue setting up the message center, I took Fredrickson and Stimson to find the break in the wire. The line had been installed in the trees about twelve feet above ground through the bivouac area. Beyond that it was on the ground except where it crossed the zigzagging Jeep trails where it again was about twelve feet above ground.

We soon found the break where a herd of wild cattle had gone through and tangled with the wire. The line was the small combat wire with very thin insulation and was easily broken.

We repaired the break and returned to the radio shack where we discussed the state of the line with me saying, "I'd like to get all the lines into the trees but since I'm the only climber it will take weeks."

"The infantry left us two crude eight foot ladders that they used," reported Crawford.

"We will get organized and start it the first thing tomorrow. It will still take considerable time as we have to leave two men here and we will all have to try to get some sleep during the days."

Soon after dark it started to rain hard and we lost the lines to both O.P.s. Tex and Snag started toward O.P. 1 while Fred went with me toward O.P. 2.

At the first jeep trail crossing I said, "Fred, let's clip in our test phone here and see what happens."

We couldn't contact the O.P. and we couldn't contact the radio shack so we made a few more tests. I said, "Fred, it's no use that paper thin insulation just breaks down when it gets wet."

We made our way back to the radio shack and saw that Tex and Snag had returned just ahead of us. The officers were also there with Captain Ernst asking, "What happened?"

Snag answered, "Sir, the line is shorted every inch of the way toward O.P. 1."

I said, "Sir; we have the same condition in the otter line and it looks like the rain just breaks that thin insulation down."

"Wal, it must be old wire so you better set on the ball and run some new wire."

"Sir, I want to get the line up off the ground so we can do both at once. Maybe the captain will give me enough men so we can get four crews started first thing in the morning."

"We just cain't wait until mornin'. It just ain't SOP. You have to get it done tonight and four of you should be enough"

"Sir, it just isn't going to be as easy as the Captain seems to think. Sure if we put a reel of wire on a jeep and unwind it as we drive alone all we will have to do is the splicing. That way we will wind up with the same kind of a mess that we now have. The splicing isn't going to go too fast in this rain and dark."

"Wal, you coulda' had it half done while you were talking."

Seeing that it still wasn't any use to try to reason with a brick wall I gave up.

Fred, and I worked through the night and progressed about three hundred yards beyond the bivouac area. Back at the message center before breakfast, Tex and Snag reported similar progress.

After breakfast, I was happy to see Starrcome over instead of the captain. He asked, "How did you do last night?"

"Sir, the new lines are less than twenty percent complete. We are all tired and need some rest so I hope we can get more men."

"I think you can use the radio operators who are not busy on

important projects. Who do you want?"

"Sir, Lohman, , Taylor and Wellman are the three who are familiar with this type of work and they are all back at Cape Gloucester. I think that all of the operators except Hilton, Nolen, Reslgo and that super-dud Skilarski can splice a line and check for shorted and open circuits."

For the day I was given Dana Barrow, Red Butte, Ray Greenan, Jess Reitmeyer, Sam Swartz, and Paul Herr.

We went to the radio shack where Blackie, reported, "Now that the sun has dried out the lines both of them are back in service."

"Good, but we will still keep on with the new installation. Herr and Schwartz will stay here while the other four go work on the lines. Those of us who worked through the night will sack out until noon." I told him.

In the early afternoon it was reported that the line to O.P. 2 was out of service. Leaving Blackie, and Fred, with Tex to start the base station installation, I took Snag to look for the line fault.

It was not difficult to find as a 100 foot piece of wire was missing and looked like it had been cut. As we were working on the repair two men returned from a visit to the native village and asked what was wrong.

I told them, "It looks like somebody cut a chunk out of our line."

"Oh, that wire? The natives can find dozens of uses for it.

They use it for clotheslines, shoe laces, belts, boat lashings and everything else that they want to tie."

After we completed the repair we worked with the other men on the new line until supper time.

CHAPTER 53

The Rat Patrol

After supper as we were planning the night's activities, Sgt. J.F. Hayes came over and asked me, "How many of your boys will be available for the rat patrol tonight?"

"I don't know what your rat patrol is but all of our men are as busy as a cat on a tin roof and won't have time for it."

"We have to set rat traps around the bivouac and have the boys go around to remove the dead rats and reset the traps. We can't get help from the reconnaissance platoons so we will just have to use your boys."

"As I tried to explain to you in words of one syllable our men are far too busy to go rat hunting."

"If you won't help you leave me no choice except to go to the first sergeant and tell him that you refuse to cooperate."

"You just go right ahead and if you run you will get there a lot sooner."

I never did hear what the first sergeant told J.F. but from that day on nobody ever asked me to provide help for the rat patrol.

The second night was a rerun of the first with the captain insisting that we go out and work on the new installation.

In the morning, Captain Ernst asked, "Do you have the new line in now?"

"No sir, but we are more than halfway complete."

"You've been working on it two nights and a day. It 'pears to like you better get an idee an' you better get on the ball."

"Sir, we have to cross creeks and swamps and detour around the crocodiles and that does slow us down. Then too, working on these dark rainy nights is almost a lost cause. Our blackedout flashlights provide just about as much light as a wet cigarette. If we can get eight men working on the lines we should complete them today."

"I'll see that you get the men."

That night with the new lines in service the heavy rain came and shorted them out.

Gathering the men in the radio shack I said, "We will have to come up with a brilliant idea as the thin insulation on the combat wire just won't hold up in these rains."

Snag answered, "We can ground one side like they do in Tennessee."

"That sounds like the best solution. We can use the double line for one conductor and the ground for the other. Now all we need are four

ground rods."

We found some scrap metal to use for the ground rods and got the phones back in service before Captain Ernst could find out that they had been out of service.

The natives continued to cut chunks out of the telephone lines for various uses. Captain Ernst ordered, "Go up twentyfive feet with your wires."

"Sir, we can do that in time but it just won't help as these natives taught the monkeys how to climb."

"Wal, give it a try anyway. How long will it take?"

"Sir, it will take several days. As I've told you before Wellman and I are the only pole climbers and he is back at Cape Gloucester."

"Wal, why havn't you taught some of the other men to climb"

"Sir, if the captain will recall our training time has been extremely limited."

I could have told the captain that we had just one set of climbers but didn't want to confuse the issue further.

The natives enjoyed watching me climb the coconut trees. They would gather under the tree to point, laugh and jeer. They would say, "He no number one boy. Number one boy no use," as they would point at the safety belt and climbers.

As I had suggested raising the line did not help but rather made it more difficult for us to make repairs.

CHAPTER 54

Doc Takes A Boat Ride

Returning from my morning visits to the O.P.s, I went to the radio shack where Tex and Blackie, had the morning watch and asked, "How is it going this morning?"

"Looks as if Doc Cutter is headin' Stateside," drawled Tex as he pointed to where Doc was in his newly acquired outrigger canoe.

Blackie, looked out at the boat saying, "I heard Doc say he was going to the little island but it looks like he is getting off course."

"What have you heard from the patrols?"

"Nothing, they haven't been in contact since midnight."

"We will have to try a radio in another location."

"All right but it looks like Doc is heading out to sea."

"I'll go report it to the captain."

Captain Hugo was lounging on a chair that was tilted back to the officer's cabin. He had a hat pulled over his eyes for shade. I said, "Sir, it looks like Doc's in trouble with his outrigger canoe which seems to be drifting out to sea."

"Oh, he ain't a hurtin' none."

Lt. Perry who was nearby said, "Let's have a look."

We went to the radio shack where Blackie, had just set up a 20-power scope on a tripod. Blackie, told us, "It does look like Doc is having trouble and he is getting out of the boat."

After a quick look, Lt. Perry turned to Tex saying, "Go get a jeep and scoot up to the native village for a canoe and crew to go get him."

Captain Hugo who had strolled over took a look and said, "Wal, Doc ain't a hurtin' none."

Blackie, who was looking through the scope snorted, "No, he isn't hurtin' as most of the sharks are trying to get at some birds on a log a couple of hundred yards from him."

Lt. Perry took another turn at the scope saying, "The damn fool is taking his clothes off. Maybe we should try to save the canoe instead of Doc."

"He ain't a hurtin' none," Captain Hugo muttered.

Tex came back from the native village and reported, "All of the native boats are out fishing. They did send a runner to the next village seven miles up the coast."

"That will take some time," reflected Lt. Perry.

"He ain't a hurtin' none."

Blackie, retorted, "He may not be hurtn' but it sure looks like he is

trying to swim to shore with the current carrying him further out to sea."

"Wal, he ain't a hurtin' none."

I told them, "Two LCMs are coming from Cape Gloucester but they are not expected until noon."

"Wal, he ain't a hurtin' none"

Lt. Perry answered, "We went to make sure as we certainly don't want to lose the doctor. The native boat won't be here for a couple of hours. You know if those sharks ever spot that naked man he won't last ten minutes."

"Wal, he ain't a hurtin' none."

Luck was with Doc as the LCMs arrived nearly three hours ahead of schedule. One was near enough to Doc that he could hail it. "Are you enjoying a swim?" one man shouted.

"Man, I'm not kidding. I need a ride." Doc yelled.

The men in the LCM finally decided that the doctor was really in trouble and picked him up. A few minutes later Doc got off the LCM at the beach near O.P. 1. He was tired, naked, humiliated and wiser. From that day on Doc confined his exercise to walks along the beach and jeep trails.

I was happy to see Doc safely back as my left heel was needing medical attention again. The next morning I went to sick call and told the doctor my story. After a look he said, "Your Plantar's wart has grown back so we will excise it again."

Once more I had to walk on my toe for a couple of weeks.

One of the black, green and red beetles that I described in a letter to my mother was as big as my fist. The critter had horns on its head and long legs with pincers on each foot.

The rats continued to be a nuisance. Some nights I laid in my bunk trying to hit them with a stick. They were agile at dodging the stick but I did get a few.

The natives continued to be amused at my tree climbing with some of them offering to teach me to climb their way. It was difficult to convince them that I really wasn't interested in learning their method of tree climbing.

CHAPTER 55

J.F. The Jerk

Dana Barrow who always seemed to be able to come up with the latest news came into the radio shack one morning and asked, "Did you hear what George Buck did last night?"

"No, do I have to listen to it?"

"Oh, but you will want to hear this one. He got a block of TNT and fastened it to one of those 1000 pound Japanese bombs and rigged it with a fuse. He lit the fuse and I just don't know where we would be this morning if the fuse hadn't gone out. He finally got to wondering if he hadn't done something stupid and told J.F. Hayes. Hayes just gathered up his crew and with Buck and a few others they hightailed it out of camp and sat down along the beach listening for the big explosion. After about an hour they figured it was safe to come back to see why the bomb had failed to explode. That's when they discovered that the fuse had gone out."

"Well, I guess it'd too late to get scared now."

"That's right but I sure wish somebody would get rid of Buck before he does kill a bunch of us."

Tex Crawford spoke up, "Yes, I hope he gets transferred to some other outfit. Just how could J.F. Hayes, jerk that he is, justify running out like that without alerting the rest of the troop. Say, Sgt. Peege do you see why we said we just wouldn't be able to tolerate Hayes as communication chief?"

"Yes, and I'll have to agree that Hayes is just as big of a jerk as you guys said he was."

Our rations continued to be monotonous with Captain Ernst tiring of them and sending a message back to Cape Gloucester for more rations. Two LCMs arrived and unloaded their cargo at the beach. When the load was checked it was duly noted that it consisted of those square five gallon cans of dehydrated potatoes, dehydrated carrots and dehydrated beet-root just like the huge stocks in our warehouse.

With the help of the natives, a few hunting and fishing parties were organized. We did get fresh fish three times and fresh beef twice from those foraging parties. Cowboy Walt David went on the hunting parties and then supervised the barbecuing of the beef.

The one fringe benefit in being so remote from division HQ was that we didn't have to stand inspections every Saturday.

CHAPTER 56

Back To Cape Gloucester

We were not unhappy on July 7 when we left Iboki Point with its crocodiles, snakes and insects and went back to windswept Cape Gloucester.

One of the first sights we saw at Cape Gloucester was the entire population of a village going to some sort of a shindig. All looked freshly bathed with the women in new grass skirt and, of course, no brassieres. The men had clean, brightly P colors lap-laps (short skirts) and ribbons in their hair.

Another unusual sight was the volcano erupting at night with a great shower of sparks and hot rocks shooting skyward. Some of those red hot rocks must have been as big as automobiles.

At reveille one morning Sgt. MacKenzie announced that there would be furloughs to Australia and those wanting to go should report to the orderly tent sometime that day and sign up.

I didn't want a furlough to Australia as it would affect any possible furlough to the States and any possible rotation. A number of men did sign up with exactly two going,

Captain Ernst was relieved of command with Lt. Robert Partridge from the 620th Tank Destroyer Battalion coming over as temporary commander. Later he was promoted to captain and commander of the 620th T.D. Recon Co. so he was probably given temporary command of the 40th Recon to become familiar with recon work.

Lt. Partridge did the troop a big favor in disposing of our perennial bad guy, George Buck. Buck, always troublesome sober, tanked up on Cowboy's jungle juice and that brought out his mean streak. He slashed another man with his knife and that was the last straw.

Buck had a cousin who was a colonel in the infantry and always helped Buck get off with just troop punishment in previous escapades.

Lt. Partridge paid no heed to the fact that Buck had a high ranking cousin and insisted that he be court-martialed. Buck was given three years at hard labor on New Guinea with the rest of the men in the troop breathing a sigh of relief.

Near the end of July we heard rumors that nurses had arrived on the island and were at the station hospital. It was August 13 when I saw two of them and they were the first white women I'd seen since leaving Hawaii the previous December.

On July 30, I took my heel to the medics for the third time and for the third time they cut out the Plantar's wart. For the third time I had to

walk on my heel for two weeks.

Ronald "Fred" Fredrickson would stop at my tent each Sunday morning and ask, "Are you ready to go to church, Sarge?"

Nearly always I walked the half mile to where service was held with him. He was an intelligent young man and I always enjoyed the visit with him on those walks to and from church. It also got us away from the army routine for a couple of hours.

Lt. Starr came into the radio shack and told me, "The 108th Inf. is offering a two week training session in amphibious communications. It starts Monday morning and you can have a jeep and pick three other men to go with you to take the training."

At 8:00 a.m. Monday we reported to the training site where some replicas of LCMs had been constructed on the beach. Walkie-Talkie radios were provided as we got into the mockups. When an officer blew a whistle the ramp was lowered and we all ran about fifty yards and dug a foxhole in the sand. After the officers were satisfied with the foxholes we filled them in and returned to the LCMs to repeat the process.

When the foxhole digging had been done four times it was 10:00 a.m. and I said to the men, "It looks like the entire forenoon is going to that same routine. If all are agreeable we can go back to the troop and return here at 1:00 p.m."

Ray Greenan answered, "That sounds good as we all know how to run across a beach and dig a foxhole."

We went back at 1:00 p.m. and they were still doing the routine. After one foxhole, I said, "Well, it looks like they are going to spend the entire day on that drill so we may as well depart and try again tomorrow morning."

We went back both Tuesday and Wednesday morning and they were still running across the beach and digging a foxhole. Friday we found some more of the same.

We went back the following Monday and they were still following the same program so without getting on the LCM we returned to the troop never to return to the amphibious communication training.

When Lt. Starr asked, "How did the training go?"

"Sir, would you believe that the 108th spent the full two weeks running across a beach and digging a foxhole?"

"Yes, after four years in the army nothing surprises me."

About the first of September, Lt. Partridge went back to the 620th Tank Destroyers with Lt. Starr being promoted to captain and to our troop's commanding officer.

CHAPTER 57

Another Wart On The Heel

On Sept. 7, I went back to the medics with the wart on my left heel. The doctor looked and stated, "Yes, the Planter's wart is back so we will have to excise it one more time."

"Sir, it has already been cut out three times and has grown right back each time so I was hoping for a more permanent solution."

"We could send you to the hospital and have it burned out with an electric needle but then you would miss a week's duty."

"Sir, I just don't think the outcome of the war would be affected if I missed duty for a week."

Ignoring my intended sarcasm, the doctor said, "We will try cutting it out one more time and if it comes back again we will then send you over to the hospital to have it burned out."

An hour later the doctor reported, "There. I think we got deep enough this time so that you won't have to worry about it growing back again."

He was right and I did have to walk on my toe for two months but the wart never came back.

We did start getting fresh meat and eggs occasionally. On Sept. 10, I wrote a letter to my mother telling her that we had roast beef, fresh potatoes and cherry pie for dinner. That was something to write home about as it wasn't our usual Sunday dinner.

In Sept., Art Lohman, went to the hospital. Tex Crawford was also ailing and we learned that those two would fill the two-man rotation quota. With all of the propaganda about the 18-month rotation those were the only two from our troop to be rotated. Both would have been evacuated by the medics if it hadn't been for the rotation so in reality we drew a blank for the 18-month rotation plan.

Blackie Bryson returned Stateside for another reason. Jack Nolen went on furlough to Australia where he went to the hospital and never returned to the troop.

Ray Greenan was promoted to platoon sergeant and Red Butte to section chief. That made five good operators plus Jack Nolen that we lost. I went to Captain Starr saying, "Sir, we have lost six radio operators and we were already short so we should get some men in a training program."

"Sergeant, that won't be necessary as we are getting trained radio operators in the replacements that are coming."

We did get two good radio operators, Ray Voight and Hank Raymond. Bill Van Zatta could get by under the better conditions while

Paul Rancatori and Bill Zamboroski were complete duds. There was one more who did not leave New Britain with us and I've forgotten his name.

I went to Captain Starr and told him, "Sir, we lost five good operators and Nolen. We got two good operators and one who might do in a pinch and three that are unable to cut the mustard so we should do something about training more men."

"Yes. It looks like we are short of radio operators but with all of the work and training coming up to get ready for the Philippine operation I just don't see how we will have time to train operators. I do have some good news for you as the communications chief has been upgraded to staff sergeant."

"Thanks Sir, the chiefs with similar responsibilities in the infantry are master sergeants and warrant officers."

"Yes, I know but the powers back in Washington D.C. think that the infantry does all of the work and fighting."

We were in an intensive training phase, once more with overnight exercises. In early November we had been on a maneuver and were getting ready to return to our bivouac late in the afternoon. I was contacting the several patrols that were still out when I happened to look up to see a beautiful blonde woman looking at me. My mouth must have dropped open as I stared in wonderment. The woman looked puzzled and finally walked away with the officer who was escorting her. Later, I thought she must have said something to me which I was unable to hear because of the earphones I was wearing.

When Captain Starr returned, I told him, "Sir, I've just been in these islands way too long and I'm having hallucinations. I just had an illusion that I saw a beautiful blonde woman standing right in front of the car."

"I met her and talked to her."

"Sir, are you having hallucinations too?"

"That was no hallucination there is a USO show on the island and she is one of the stars."

"Sir, does that mean that I'm not crazy enough to be evacuated Stateside?"

"I'm afraid it does."

Captain Starr was a good C.O. but it was only a couple of days later that he was transferred.

CHAPTER 58

Another New Commander

Our new C.O., Captain John Scott Robinson, had been with the 93rd Recon Troop at Empress Augusta Bay, Bougainville and his troop had been one of the bright spots in that perfunctory division.

When Southwest Pacific HQ decided that the 93rd Div. could be used only for garrison duty the recon troop was disbanded and Captain Robinson was available to come to the 40th.

Unhappy to see Captain Starr depart, I soon learned that Captain Robinson was capable and cavalry trained.

It didn't take me long to find that Captain Robinson could be explosive when I was five minutes late for a non-com meeting. Later he sent for me to report to his tent. He let me know in no uncertain words that he would not tolerate anything except punctuality from the non-coms. After his outburst he talked of his hopes for the troop and asked, "How are your radio operators trained?"

"Sir, since the departure of Captain Bassford, a year and a half ago the radio operator training has been sadly neglected. We do not have enough capable operators to put one in each M-8."

"We have enough listed here and I couldn't help but notice that none of the gunners can take over as radio operator like they should be able to."

"Sir, that list is misleading as the radio operator ratings were handed out on recommendations from the platoon leader and platoon Sgt. without regard to their effectiveness as a radio operator. It wasn't until Captain Partridge was in command that the communications chief was given any say in the promotions. Hilton, Reisgo, and Rancatori have a hard time finding the on-off switch and the jacks for their key and earphones. Skilarski doesn't even know a radio from a tool box. Three others can operate but not well enough to be dependable."

"Do we have enough qualified operators for the officer's M-8's?"

"Yes, Sir."

"For starters we will assign those best qualified to the officers and the next best to the platoon sergeants. The section sergeants will just have to take what's left. We will get a radio operator training program started and train some new operators."

"Sir, it is doubtful if we have enough time as it takes an absolute minimum of two months for the fast learners."

"Let's think in terms of a sixteen hour day."

"Sir, we can try but even then it is doubtful that any will be ready to do much operating."

We didn't start a radio training program as the troop was given 15 well used amphibious tanks with orders to get five of them ready for use in the landing by cannibalizing the others for parts. In addition to getting the vehicles we already had ready the extra work would take the entire troop sixteen hours a day.

Vertical exhaust pipes had to be installed. All of the ignition systems had to be waterproofed, radios had to be installed and all other equipment had to be tested.

Captain Robinson sent for me and asked, "Sergeant, just who besides you, is the very best operator in the troop?"

"Sir, I would say it is just about a tossup between Jess Reitmeyer and our new man, Ray Voight."

After looking at his papers he said, "Well, Reitmeyer is a good gunner and Voight hasn't had much time on the turret guns. I'll take Reitmeyer and the executive officer can have Voight. Reitmeyer will be the radio operator, you will be the gunner and Ack Ack Anderson will be the driver and I'll have the best crew in the troop."

Captain Robinson granted permission to paint names and pictures on the vehicles. Russ Nunes with a couple of helpers did the work. Ack Ack came to me one day and asked, "Do you want to see our M-8 now that Nunes has finished his art work?"

Going with Ack Ack, I looked and saw a picture of "Goofy" the Mickey Mouse cartoon character sitting on a bomb holding a lighted match to a fuse. Underneath Goofy was the name "Brainstorm."

The amphibious tanks called "Water Buffalos" to distinguish them from the "Alligators" which were strictly personnel carriers had a turret with a 37 mm cannon and .30 caliber machinegun just like the turrets of the M-8s. They had two machine gun positions behind the turret thus requiring a crew of six men.

The First Platoon was given the dubious honor of going in with the water buffalos and would switch back to their regular vehicles later.

We had to use some of the radios from the M-8s and we had to make sure that they could be readily removed and installed back into the M-8s. Fortunately we were able to get enough cables so that we would not have to take time to remove and reinstall cables. We could also leave the antennas on the amphibs. Like the M-8s the amphibs had two radios one for communications between platoons and also with headquarters. The other was a short range radio for inter-platoon communication.

The inter-platoon radios in the M-8s and those in the jeeps were voice operated and we had to train nearly everyone in the troop to operate them.

We worked right up to the evening of Dec. 8 to get everything prepared to load onto the ships on Dec. 9.

CHAPTER 59

Another Ocean Voyage

Dec. 9, 1944, we boarded ship off New Britain for the trip to the Philippines. The ships were anchored some distance from shore and we were taken out in LCMs . It wasn't long until I discovered that I was still seasick prone and by the time we got out to the ship I was in such bad shape that I had to be carried aboard while those not ill climbed the cargo nets.

The captain's command section and the 3rd platoon were assigned to the ship which was not a troop carrier but a cargo ship called an AKA. Most of the troop's regular vehicles were on the ship.

After being carried aboard, I went to the sick bay for a couple of hours and when the doctor determined that I was fit for duty I went to where our other men were and found them getting ready to get off the ship and go board another. Captain Robinson could stay and keep two men so he picked me and Powell who was his jeep driver and doubled as the captain's orderly.

Our men were replaced by a number of quartermaster troops who were always notorious for their looting ways. Powell and I were informed that we would have to help the navy crew stand guard to try to keep the looting under control. Captain Robinson was excused from guard and other menial duties.

When the ships were loaded they set sail for Manus in the Admiralty Islands and a rendezvous with the 37th Div. from Bougainville: as that unit would join the 40th Div. in the XIV Corps. The 43rd and 6th Divs. from New Guinea would be the I Corps. The 25th Division of Guadalcanal and New Georgia fame would be in reserve.

After a few days At Manus, we went to Salamauea, New Guinea for our "Dry Runs". I lucked out and didn't have to leave the ship for that exercise.

After Salamauea, we went back to Manus for a few days. On that second stop I did get to go to a recreation center on shore for four hours. The recreation consisted mostly of swimming and ball playing. We were allowed to buy two bottles of warm beer and there was a log to sit on while we drank the beer.

After leaving Manus, I suffered an attack of malaria and was given an extra bottle of atabrine with instructions to take two each morning and night. I could lie in the sick bay while haling a chill but otherwise had to carry on with my guard duty. In the Pacific a temperature of 103, or more, degrees was required for hospitalization.

About the time I was recovering from the malaria I managed to get burns on my left foot and leg. The doctor said, "Since you have an extra pair of shoes just cut away portions of the one you are wearing and you will be able to remain on duty."

The duty continued the same which was standing guard to try to keep the quartermaster troops from looting. They did get one of my two canteens as I normally carried just one while on guard. My carbine was with me it all times even during mealtime.

Besides the guard duty, Captain Robinson insisted that Powell and I go below and check our vehicles a few times. The compartments to the vehicles were kept locked which was fortunate for us as we would have lost equipment had the QM men had access to them. As one navy man said, "Those guys will take anything that isn't too hot and too heavy."

As the huge convoy neared the Philippines it started to attract the attention of the Japanese who would send planes to attack. Their favorite targets were the aircraft carriers, cruisers and troop transports with our cargo ship being ignored.

The convoy sailed through the Southern Philippines, through the Sulu Sea and on into the South China Sea. Except for submarines it was the first American ships in those waters since the dark days of 1941 and 1942.

CHAPTER 60

Lingayen Landing

Daylight came on Jan. 9, 1945, and we were getting nearer to the big guns we had been hearing for hours. We sailed into smoke filled Lingayen Gulf. We went in past the battleships with their thundering 16 inch guns, in past the cruisers with their six and eight inch guns firing strong and on past the destroyers with their five inch guns belching fire and steel. Those barrages were not intended to kill many Japanese but rather keep them off the landing beaches. Sure we would have to fight them later but at least we would be organized and on dry land.

Luzon would be the biggest campaign of the Pacific War and the Lingayen landing would be the only WWII landing where four divisions would go in abreast.

Our 40th Division was on the right flank right into the town of Lingayen with the 37th just to our left at Dagupan. Next to the 37th was the 6th and on the extreme left, near San Fernando, the 43rd. The 25th would come in where it would be needed the most.

Cargo and troop ships took positions in the fiery harbor while trying to dodge Japanese bombs, suicide planes and suicide boats. It was the first serious use of the Japanese Kamikaze planes to try to disrupt a landing.

We had to stay under cover as much as possible to keep from getting hit by our own falling flak.

As H-hour approached all types of landing craft were lowered from the ships and filled with men and equipment. When the barges were loaded the order was given for the first wave to hit the beach and the navy gunfire to cease. The barges would keep returning to pick up the successive waves. Due to the attrition on landing barges each wave would be smaller than the one before. My thoughts were with our First Platoon going in with the first wave in those awkward amphibious tanks.

It seemed like ages before someone announced over the P.A. system, "The first wave is on the beach and advancing against light opposition. Second wave prepare to debark."

An LST (Landing Ship, Tank) came to the side of our ship and our vehicles were loaded on it. We had more than forty vehicles on the LST with just the three of us to drive them off. The LST would not stay on the beach long enough for the three of us to drive all of the vehicles off so we were hoping that some of the rest of the troop would be in the area.

It was noon and we ate dinner with the LST crew. The dinner was boiled potatoes, tomatoes and bread as the LST crews had just about the lowest ration priority in the navy and as low as that of the combat units in

the army which was just about rock bottom,

We were in luck as the LST beached where the men of our second and third platoons could see us and they dashed over to help unload. Soon there was a driver in each rig with men to spare. Captain Robinson and I rode off in the turret of our M-8 which was our usual positions.

We found a small grove of palms that would help conceal us and offer some protection from the falling flak and set up a temporary C.P. Patrols would be sent out from there and the rest of the troop would look until they found our location.

As we waited for the rest of the troop we heard the news of the landing. The 40th Division had the lightest casualties with fewer than five percent in the assault waves. Each division around to the left had successively higher casualties with the 43rd suffering the most. The 25th Division would land and join the 43rd and 6th and start the long bloody drive to Baguio. That was a campaign that would still be raging at the end of the war six weeks after the Philippine Island Campaign was officially closed.

The official announcement was that the Lingayen landing was unopposed. Those who took part in it will never be convinced as they can name comrades who died in the operation.

The 37th and 40th Divisions would start the drive south toward Clark Field and Manila. The 40th Recon Troop was given the special mission of going west across the Bolinao Peninsula to Dasol Bay on the South China Sea. The captain would take the 2nd and 3rd platoons on that mission with the rest of the troop going south with Lt. Olsen the troop's executive officer in charge.

It was 4:00 p.m. when the first platoon came back to the C.P. with the amphibious tanks which they were calling paper tanks and creeping coffins. They had stopped a tank led Japanese charge with one gunner, Gene Brunstetter, knocking out five Japanese tanks with five shots. Gene said, "I knew that I couldn't take a chance of them getting off a shot with one of their 57s."

The 7.7 mm Japanese rifle and machinegun bullets fired at close range could penetrate the thin armor on the sides of the amphibs. Several of the men were wounded and one young machine gunner, Bailey, was killed.

As we had to leave the area soon, we got all hands to turn to and help unload the amphibs. We put the radios back into the first platoon's vehicles. We removed all rations and ammunition and then ran the tanks under some trees where we left then parked.

We never did hear what happened to the amphibs and they may have

been junked, given to the guerillas, used for training or even rejuvenated for one more operation. Slow and awkward as they were they had played their part in WWII history.

CHAPTER 61

To The South China Sea

The first night we went to a point about three miles east of Port Sual and set up a road block to protect that flank against any possible counterattack from the Bolinao Peninsula. We were out of range of that incessant falling flak and the men would be able to sleep when not on the road block.

Father Herbst, division chaplain, joined us and circulated among the men with his cheerful words. He would say, "You don't have a thing to worry about as I always bring good luck. I've been on a number of such long range missions and have never had to bury a man and I'm sure that we will all return."

We left early the next morning and as we approached Labrador the men who had been on patrol there the afternoon before showed us the Japanese they had met. They were still sprawled where they had fallen and already partially eaten by the dogs. A Filipino told us, "we'll bury them later they won't hurt the dogs."

Aliminos, our first objective, was twenty-five miles Northwest and progress was slow as we were often stopped by Filipinos who wanted to give us information about the Japanese and tell us about their hardships during the Japanese occupation.

We would hear the same story many times without much variation. They would say, "For three long years we have waited for you. Under the Japanese we suffered very much. They took our rice, they took our pigs, they took our chickens, they took our cows and they took our wives."

We heard many stories of atrocities perpetrated by the brutal Japanese. There were stories of tongues being cut out, water treatments, hanging by thumbs and beheadings.

Guerillas would be with us most of the time on our mission across the peninsula. All of the Filipinos would share their scanty food supplies with us.

In addition to being stopped by Filipinos we exchanged long range rifle fire with several groups of Japanese who appeared to be withdrawing to the south. It was early afternoon when we arrived at a position about a mile from Aliminos. Filipinos told us, "The Japanese are in Aliminos with their main force concentrated around the city hall."

Sgt. Red Butte took a small foot patrol into town to determine the exact location of the Japanese.

While waiting we were communicating with our liaison team at division headquarters. Our orders, "Try to take some prisoners as

Alimos might be the Japanese HQ for the peninsula. We want to find out where the Japanese are retreating for their stand. Don't let any of them get away."

The patrol returned and Butte reported, "The Japanese are unaware of our presence. Most of them are on the opposite side of the city hall from us just lazing around. We saw one officer just strolling in the garden. The city hall appears to be their headquarters."

Captain Robinson decided it would be easy to get close to the Japanese position without being detected. One platoon would come in from the north and the other from the south. The captain's team with the addition of a jeep from each platoon and about fifteen guerillas would go straight in from the east.

The captain's group didn't have as far to go so we got into a position about 200 yards from the city hall where we would await for the others to get into, position.

As we waited, I saw two men near the city hall and asked the captain, "Sir, are Nunes and Lowe supposed to be over there near the city hall?"

Looking at them Captain Robinson snorted, "What in hell do those crazy kids think they are going to do?"

He didn't have long to wonder as each of them picked a window and tossed a grenade through it. Rifle fire followed quickly and when the platoons heard the shooting they thought they had missed a signal and dashed pell-mell toward the action. I saw two prone Japanese about fifty feet in front of our M-8 and started to lay a high explosive shell between them when the captain shouted, "Don't shoot those are guerrillas."

As I started to train the turret guns on another target the two Japanese got up and ran to join their comrades who were now fleeing westward. The captain emptied his carbine at them as they dashed away.

Some of the Japanese elected to stand and fight and took cover behind trees and hedges and started shooting. With our patrols closing in from three directions they could not keep out of sight and were like slitting ducks. Seeing their situation more of them jumped up to follow their departing comrades. Our men were handicapped by being in each others lines of fire and we had to let a lot of the Japanese go for fear of hitting our own men.

We were further handicapped by not being able to tell the Filipino guerrillas, many of them dressed in Japanese clothes, from the Japanese. In future battles we would insist that the guerrillas stay behind the M-8s so we wouldn't have that problem.

I searched for a target and every time I would get a Japanese in my

sights some of our own men would be in the way. Later, I heard from the other turret gunners and they all had the same problem so that most of the shooting was done by the jeep crews.

The fight lasted about twenty minutes with all of the Japanese who hadn't fled being dead. We came through the battle without having a man scratched.

After the shooting stopped, Filipinos started to come in to the town square. Seeing one who appeared to be a leader Captain Robinson asked, "Will you take care of burying those Japanese?"

"Yes, but we'll let the dogs eat on them first."

We stayed around the Alimos City Hall for a couple of hours before leaving to find a place to bivouac for the night.

We went into our night bivouac in the middle of a pasture with our vehicles circled covered wagon fashion as we knew the Japanese would be reluctant to attack our armor across an open space.

Filipinos flocked into our bivouac and Father Herbst became the center of attention. Besides being optimistic he was a good story teller and always carried a deck of cards to show numerous card tricks,

As we drove west toward Dasol Bay we often ran into small groups of Japanese who were retreating southward. Sometimes they would dig in beside the road for delaying action. Our tactics remained the same with only the names of the places changing. We would keep the Japanese pinned down with rifle and machine gun fire then use the high explosive (H.E.) loads from our 37 mm cannon and grenades to finish them.

Sam Murray, a third platoon gunner, became expert at getting Japanese with his 37. Whether the Japanese were dug in or moving Sam would lay the H.E. rounds right at their feet. We never did know how many he accounted for but other members of his M-8 crew swore that he got more than a hundred in those first two weeks.

We arrived at Dasaol and went south to Santa Cruz arriving there on Jan. 22. On the morning, of Jan. 23, we received a message that read, "Break contact and return to Labrador at once."

CHAPTER 62

One Afternoon For The Guns To Cool

The distance we had taken two weeks to cover took about five hours for the return trip. We arrived at Labrador about noon and found the rest of the troop in a small grassy glade near the creek and not far from where we had crossed two weeks earlier. Unlike the place of our first crossing this spot was untouched by war with our own machines being the only indication that it could be something other than a peaceful place.

Captain Robinson called a non-com meeting, to give us orders. "We will be here until 2:00 a.m. and then we will move south to a position just north of Bamban. The division met strong resistance from the Japanese this morning and plan to send the armor into Clark Field tomorrow. We will spend the afternoon cleaning and getting our equipment ready for the new mission."

Our supply sergeant had new clothes to replace the tattered rags we were wearing. Our invasion fatigues which had been impregnated with G.I. soap and insect repellent hadn't stood up under the rough usage and most of the men were being flapped with their rags.

After we were issued the new clothes we went to the not too clean creek for a much needed bath. What a luxury that was to get to scrub off two week's accumulation of perspiration and battle grime. Those two weeks without a bath had rendered us dirty, itchy and odorous.

Men from the 40th Signal Company came to help repair our radios. Hal Taylor, our technician, and the radio operators would work with the signal men.

The mess sergeant announced, "Section chiefs can now come and draw three days rations."

When I got to the ration truck, I said, "We have eight men in our section."

For rations we got one dozen "B" ration biscuits which were about the size of a soda cracker-, two one-pound cans of diced beets, two one pound cans of diced carrots, one one-half Pound can of dry Australian cheese and a number ten can of orange marmalade. There was no coffee for the captain.

Next we replenished our depleted supplies of ammunition with the ammunition corporal doling out the ammo and answering questions.

"Just six rounds of canister for each 37 so you'll have to hoard it for Banzai charges. There is plenty of armor piercing and high explosive. There isn't any white phosphorous for the 37s or the 60 mm mortars."

Corporal Brown, armorer, had procured an 81 mm mortar and a

supply of ammunition including white phosphorous. He would usually go with the 81 as its gunner. We could fire thatched roofs with tracer bullets but would need the white phosphorous at times.

I had to go help work on the radios. Vibrations from firing the turret guns had done some damage. Some of the antennas had been shot off by Japanese bullets. With all hands pitching in we were prepared to go again by 6:00 p.m.

That left the ration situation as our main concern. Filipinos had given us a lot of eggs and as we sat eating hard boiled eggs and B ration biscuits for supper I got the idea of boiling some of those eggs to take with us.

The men in our section gathered up all of the eggs they could find and I boiled more than six-hundred. I was going to say hardboiled but some of the yolks were still soft. As the men would come and get an egg they would sometimes bite into a soft yolk and then yell, "Hard-boil them next time."

In spite of some of the yolks being soft the eggs were all gone before we were issued more rations.

CHAPTER 63

Mission Through The Devil's Backyard

In the predawn of Jan. 24th, our troop drove into our rendezvous position a few miles north of which was at the northwest corner of the sprawling Clark Field complex. Behind Bamban to the west, rose the foothills of the Zambales Mountains.

We had driven south from Labrador during the early morning hours with much of the way lit by the burning city of Tarlac which was torched by the retreating Japanese. Now Tarlac was behind us and still lighting the northeastern sky.

As we waited for further orders, the 620th Tank Destroyer Recon Company, commanded by Captain Partridge, pulled into position at our left. Like our troop they were equipped with M-8 armored cars and jeeps. Next the 37th Cavalry Recon Troop came into position on our right. Instead of M-8s they had light tanks which had the same 37 MM cannon and thirty caliber machine guns in the turrets.

As the dawn came it dawned on us that the three lightly armored reconnaissance units were the armor that would try to take Clark Field from the stubborn Japanese defenders. I thought it was more than a little ironic that the 6th Army couldn't muster more and heavier armor for such a task.

When there was enough light to see a hundred yards, our pitifully inadequate forces were ordered forward.

As we reached the outskirts of Bamban we ran into heavy artillery and small arms fire. Our orders were, "Move back and try further left (east) as we have an infantry regiment ready to take Bamban."

We drove to Mabalacat and again ran into heavy fire. The orders were, "The 37th take Mabalacat with the other two units trying again further to the left."

That seemed fair enough, one recon troop against one town.

When we turned south again we ran into heavy fire for the third time. The orders were, "The 620th stay there and engage the Japanese with the 40th trying further to the left."

As we went east away from the Zambales Mountains the Japanese lines had become thinner. The next time we turned south we captured an airstrip after a brief skirmish. Japanese were still at the far end of the strip. A Piper Cub plane came in for a landing and came under fire. After stopping near us the pilot jumped out of the plane and gave it a quick look and then dashed over saying, "Look out for those Japanese they are firing live ammunition."

Our troop continued south and then back west often with firefights and often dodging Japanese tanks. Since their tanks were equipped with 57 mm cannon we really didn't want to match our 37s against them.

It was late afternoon when we had worked our way back to the foothills of the Zambales Mountains and south of Bamban. At that point the mountains were bristling with Japanese artillery with some of the gun barrels as big as telephone poles.

We sent a message to our liaison team at division headquarters asking, "Has Bamban been taken? Can we get back through there?"

After receiving an affirmative reply on both questions we started toward Bamban with our third platoon leading. As we neared the town the third platoon called back, "We've run into a large force of the enemy and they are going to charge."

Captain Robinson gave the order to turn around and head south at full speed. As we turned south and raced away from our own lines the first platoon was leading. As they sped down a runway they ran off into a grass covered swamp. There they were up to their hubs in mud, all three armored cars and six jeeps.

Many commanders would have abandoned that platoon. Others would have taken the men onto the remaining vehicles. But we had Captain Robinson who could reconnoiter the badlands of hell. We needed those men and we needed the equipment. Picking up the microphone Captain Robinson shouted into the troop radio, "Back third platoon and fight the Japanese off. Second platoon pull the first out. Two heavies on a heavy and two jeeps on a jeep."

Winch lines were run out on the double. Those were brave men running winch lines through a hail of bullets. Soon one M-8 and two jeeps were back on the dry runway. Even as they were being pulled out of the mud men were pulling their winch lines toward the still stuck vehicles. Soon the first platoon was back on solid ground.

Captain Robinson picked up the microphone and ordered, "First platoon as soon as you are free cover the third platoon so they can get turned around again. Third platoon head south, then the second and then the first."

We dashed south again firing at any Japanese luckless enough to get in our way. For several miles we raced south running a gauntlet of Japanese. When the situation had cooled down we turned east away from the Zambales Mountains with the bristling guns and swarming hordes of Japanese. Later we turned north to try to make it back to our own lines.

It was after dark when we came to a large sandbar by a river. Captain Robinson made a decision, "We will hole up here for the night and

get some rest. If we continue on we might come under fire from our own infantry."

The vehicles were circled in the middle of the sandbar so that the Japanese would have to attack across an open space and we knew they were usually reluctant for such an assault.

When the motors were stopped and it was quiet enough for us to hear, we were hailed from across the river by a good American voice, "What outfit is that? We would have fired but we heard your American profanity."

We were across the river from one of the 37th Division's infantry regiments that had moved up that day. We enjoyed a good night's sleep.

That was one of our longest days and although we would be in combat in the Zambales Mountains and later go to Panay and Negros for more combat I don't believe we were ever greater than that late afternoon when we refused to abandon our first platoon to that horde of Japanese south of Bamban.

CHAPTER 64

The Zambales Mountains

It took the 40th and 37th Divisions the rest of January to secure Clark Field but the 40th Recon would start operating in the foothills of the Zambales Mountains while the infantry units were busy on Clark Field.

The 40th Division with their already tired men was selected for the grueling task of digging the Japanese out of the mountains west of Clark Field. By any standards that operation was one of the toughest of the Pacific War.

The 38th Division had landed at the upper end of Bataan Peninsula and would come across to assault the Zambales Mountains from the south. The 38th ran into strong opposition in Zigzag Pass and didn't get to their original destination for months.

In addition to being well dug in, the Japanese had their biggest artillery concentration of the entire Pacific War. With the Japanese having us outnumbered at least four to one, their advantage of height, artillery, and fortifications it would be an uphill fight in more ways than one.

One of our first missions would take us to the old prison camp at O'Donnell which was several miles northwest of Bamban.

Filipinos, who three years earlier had survived the infamous Death March, and had survived a year in the prison camp showed us the remains of the old installations. With tear stained faces and choking voices they told us of the march from Bataan to O'Donnell. They showed us the common grave of 45,000 Filipinos and 5,000 Americans who had died of disease or starvation or been killed by their brutal Japanese captors during the year the prisoners had been kept in the camp. The corpses had been taken out each morning and piled like cordwood in a continuous trench and then covered with dirt pushed in by a bulldozer.

I can't say that what the Filipinos told and showed us that day increased our hatred for the Japanese. Each of us could name a long list of friends, relatives and old army buddies who had died fighting the Japanese. All of us had seen the results of their many atrocities. We had heard the stories told and retold of their mutilation and cannibalistic acts of the bodies of allied soldiers. When one hates with a passion that knows no bounds, how much more hatred can one develop? However, it did seem like our men had more enthusiasm the next few days when they would fire a house containing Japanese and then shoot them as they came running out. That was a tactic that we had to use a number of times during February.

If you think that was a cruel form of warfare remember these three things. The Japanese nearly always attracted our attention by firing first.

They had a chance to surrender and be fairly treated which was a chance they never gave us. Every Japanese eliminated in that fashion would be one less for the infantry to dig out of those caves in the mountains. That was the infantry that was paying a frightful price, in blood, for each cave taken.

General Douglas MacArthur came to O'Donnell on the third day we went in there. That day the troop was split for two missions and I was with the other mission.

All through the Pacific War the offensive would change twice each twenty four hours. The Americans would attack with the dawn of each day and make some advances during the day. Those advances were usually not great as the stubborn Japanese would contest every foot of ground. With the coming of night the Americans would dig in and wait for the Japanese counterattack which would be undertaken in the hope of regaining some ground.

During the Zambales Mountains fight the 40th Recon would make daytime missions and then go back to Bamban for the night where we dug in and formed a secondary line of defense in the event that the Japanese managed to break through those thin infantry lines.

Stretching south from O'Donnell for about four miles was a rolling, grassy plain with some of the grass growing six feet tall. South of the plain, the Zambales Mountains jutted east toward Clark Field while more of the mountains were west of the plain. Near the foothills we found three small valleys separated by low ridges. The first valley we called "Crow Valley" with the second being dubbed "Death Valley" and the third having no special name.

Almost daily our troop or the portion that could be spared from other missions would go into the area south of O'Donnell to harass the Japanese. We would have several skirmishes with Japanese patrols every day. Sometimes we would go into Death Valley and shell the Japanese positions with our 37MM cannon. The foothills were about 300 yards from our positions and it was about 2000 yards to the crest of the first ridge. In addition to the 37MM cannon our one 81 MM mortar was often used.

During the first week of February on one of our forays into Death Valley we spotted a Japanese tank at about 1400 yards from our position. At that distance I would not be able to see the target for a few seconds after firing because of turret vibrations so Ack Ack Anderson grabbed our 20 power scope and set it on the jeep hood. When Ack Ack said he had the tank in focus, I squeezed off a high explosive round that would be easy to spot with him yelling, "You just barely missed it and were a little low and

to the left."

I dropped in an armor piercing load and aimed high and right for "Kentucky windage" and squeezed off the round. Ack Ack shouted, "Hit, the Japanese are bailing out."

Captain Robinson ordered, "Rimrack it so that it'll never move again."

Ack Ack and I took turns shooting the tank with some of the other gunners joining to put a few rounds into the tank. After it had absorbed about a dozen hits we shifted to other targets. We saw the tank in that same position every day from then on so we assumed that it had been knocked out for keeps.

One morning the general thought he would like to have us probe a little deeper so he attached an infantry platoon (50 men) and five tank destroyers to the troop. Each of those tank destroyers mounted one of the new high velocity 76 MM cannons.

Frank Nobile wasn't the regular driver of the first platoon leader's M-8 but he was assigned to it that morning. Always before we had drawn fire when we would get to the crest of the ridge that separated Death Valley from the third valley. That morning the first three jeeps and the first M-8 were not fired on. The second M-8 which was the lieutenant's crossed the ridge and advanced about thirty feet when the Japanese opened fire with a 20 MM cannon. A tank destroyer on the ridge to the right opened fire on the Japanese and matched them shot for shot with their third shot making a direct hit with Japanese and pieces of cannon flying for yards.

All three of the Japanese shots had hit the front of the M-8 bringing it to a stop with three of the crew bailing out and making it back to the safer side of the ridge as other Japanese batteries opened fire. The three jeeps and the other M-8 made a hasty retreat.

Dana Barrow, radio operator, had been in the front beside Nobile and reported, Nobile said, "I'm hit hard."

With the 40th Recon there was no doubt that we would get that crippled M-8 out. With the infantry and tank destroyers joining a firing line was quickly formed along the crest of the ridge to keep the Japanese pinned down while one of the men went out and hooked a winch line to the crippled M-8. When the M-8 was back out of the line of fire, Nobile's body was pulled from the vehicle. He had taken a 20 MM shell just above the belt buckle. Somebody looked at his feet and noticed that his shoes were missing and went over and pulled his still laced boots from the M-8. He had been hit so hard that he had been blasted right out of his shoes yet managed to say that he had been hit hard.

We made a couple of more probes before Captain Robinson sent a message to the general saying, "It would take an infantry regiment and a battalion of artillery for reinforcements before we could force our way across that valley."

The general didn't have any reinforcements to send and he didn't want to sacrifice the Recon and Tank Destroyers in a wild and futile charge so we spent the rest of the day shelling the Japanese positions from Death Valley.

One day when we were back a few miles to replenish our supplies we saw a lone P-38 flying toward us. Despite the fact that it was supposed to be an ally we dived for cover which was fortunate as the plane dumped its bombs right in our midst. We knew that the air force couldn't tell friend from foe and always took cover in these situations. We speculated on how that pilot returned to his HQ and told them how he had attacked a number of Japanese tanks and wiped them out.

CHAPTER 65

Banzai In The Engineer's Sector

We were given a night position just west of Bamban and at the base of one of the foothills where we could act as a second line of defense in the event the Japanese should break through our too thin infantry lines. It was from that base that we would launch our daytime missions during February. Most of the troop would return to the bivouac before nightfall.

The sound of rifle fire awakened me about 2:00 a.m. and I checked the weapons I'd taken into my foxhole just to the rear of our M-8. The middle finger of my left hand was firmly locked in a grenade ring with my carbine and machete under my right arm.

The rifle fire was to the west just over the hill which was the combat engineer's night sector of the secondary defense line. Both Ack Ack Anderson and Jess Reitmeyer had other duties that night and Captain Robinson was somewhere in the middle of the bivouac with the other officers. That left me as the only one to man the turret guns in the event of an attack.

The rifle fire increased in intensity with the riflemen being joined by machine gunners and mortar crews. It could mean only that the engineers were trying to stop a Banzai charge. Grabbing my weapons, I leaped into the turret and checked to make sure that the 37 was loaded with a canister round.

The charge probably wouldn't affect our sector as the Japanese seldom launched more than one Banzai at a time. Still I'd have to be alert as the Pacific Islands were full of graves of soldiers who thought that the Japanese would act as they usually behaved.

Our M-8 was facing north away from the Zambales Mountains as we could never be certain that the Japanese wouldn't circle around and attack from the rear.

Soon a battery of 105's, north and behind the engineers, opened fire. The 105's were soon joined by a battery of 155's a little further north with both batteries continuing a steady bombardment.

For the remainder of the night the engineers and artillery kept up the heavy firing, For those four hours, I sat there in the turret watching the fireworks the nearest of them about a quarter of mile from our position.

The first streaks of dawn finally came and soon there was light enough to spot a moving man a hundred feet away and the firing gradually died down as there was no longer any use of them shooting at unseen targets.

Soon now, the engineers thought, they would be able to see the piles

of dead Japanese. From now on they would be able to talk "Banzai" to anyone including the Marines.

As the light increased they looked around at their own comrades with each man thinking, "Gee, it's nice that all of my section survived."

All that was left was to keep training their red-rimmed eyes for the piles of dead Japanese that just had to be out in front of them. Full daylight came and they couldn't see anything except shell craters from the artillery fire. Finally, it dawned on them that they were not going to see piles of dead Japanese because there were none.

It was decided that some trigger-happy engineer had fired at some sort of a shadow and that started the four hour barrage. Their own firing had made so much noise that it didn't occur to them that there was no return fire and no screaming Japanese. Their only accomplishment was to plow up a large portion of the hillside.

After the "Engineer Battle" we continued our daily missions which were often in the vicinity of Death Valley and O'Donnell while the infantry kept inching up the mountains from the Clark Field - Fort Stotsenberg side.

Some of our platoons would go on longer missions with some of them lasting several days. One platoon made an extended mission to meet the 38th Division that had landed on the western side of the Bataan Peninsula.

Captain Robinson always stayed with the main portion of the troop and since I was the gunner in his M-8 that is where I stayed.

It was early March when it was decided that the exhausted 40th Division had to be relieved. After nearly two months of continues fighting, the men were too tired and the losses had been too great in some of the infantry units to carry on as an effective fighting force.

The 43rd Division, which couldn't have been in much better shape, relieved the 40th and had a ten day assault on the Japanese positions. The 43rd was followed by the 38th after that division had fought through Zigzag Pass from the Bataan Coast. Later the 6th Division came in and stayed until the end of the war. At that time the 2,500 surviving Japanese were breaking up into guerrilla units with the Filipino forces in hot pursuit.

CHAPTER 66

“Rest Camp” At Lingayen

The exhausted men of the 40th Division came streaming back to Lingayen with the 40th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop the last unit thus maintaining their traditional place between the main body of the division and the enemy.

When we were relieved in the Zambales Mountains we were told that we were going to a rest camp. Since none of us had been in a rest camp we didn't know what to expect.

It was nearly midnight when we arrived at our designated bivouac area. Despite the lateness of the hour we were issued pyramid type squad tents and canvas cots with orders to set them up that night. It took us about a half hour to set up the tents and the cots. For bedding each man received a mattress cover and blanket. Even that Spartan type of bed was the best we had since leaving New Britain three months earlier.

The expectations of the men who really expected to go into one of the rest and recreation camps they had heard of but never seen were short lived. At the morning reveille formation Captain Robinson made an announcement, "We will be here for four days and we will spend the time preparing our equipment for another amphibious landing."

The cooks did provide us with a breakfast that we could eat from our mess kits instead of a C ration can. That was a real treat even though the meal consisted of dehydrated eggs, bread and coffee.

There would be plenty of work involved in getting our radio equipment ready for another operation and I discussed the situation with the radio technician, Hal Taylor.

The big question was, "How do we get men who have had two strenuous months of combat to work like galley slaves?"

Our first maneuver was to acquire a quantity of nipa wine from the Filipinos. We then selected two or three operators from each platoon and explained to them what had to be done. We divided up into three man groups and I promised, "If the day's progress is satisfactory we can go to the river for a bath about 5:00 p.m."

I was working with two of the men replacing broken antennas and wondering why the Japanese bullets always hit the antenna when several infantrymen approached and stood looking at us in awe. I went over and asked, "What can we do for you?"

"We were just wondering if what our officers tell us about you recon men is true?"

"I don't know what your officers have been telling you."

"They tell us that you recon men are injected with some kind of dope to make you fight the way you do."

"No, any superiority we have over the infantry is due to our better equipment and more intensive training. Then we often get into places where there is no way out but to fight our way through Japanese lines to get back to our own."

They left acting as if they were not fully convinced that they were hearing the truth. Those two men being just a little high from nipping the nipa didn't help make my story sound plausible.

We made good progress during the day and at 5:00 p.m. we went to the river for our baths. A bath is a rare luxury in the life of a combat soldier and we had managed one every two or three weeks while in combat. In the tropics a person starts to smell a little "Gamey" after a couple of bathless days and in two weeks they could scarcely stand the smell of themselves let alone each other.

After supper we spent the evening working on our personal gear as that would have to be ready to go too.

I awakened about 2:00 a.m. with a malaria chill but there was nothing to do but endure it until morning. On sick call the doctor looked at the thermometer and said one-hundred-two-point-nine. That's less than 103 so it's back to duty for you. Here is a bottle of atabrine and you can take two of them three times a day until exhausted.

"Sir. I'm already pretty well exhausted."

"Smart cracks like that won't get you to the hospital. You know that I meant until the bottle of pills is exhausted."

There was nothing that I could do except take it easy and let Taylor and the operators carry on the work.

It was during the afternoon when I was lying in bed with another chill that Whitey Lowe came into the tent with a snootful of nipa wine and leading a goat. Lowe was difficult for me to take when he was sober and without a goat. He seemed doubly obnoxious that afternoon and I told him, "Lowe, get the hell out of here and take that stinking goat with you."

"I'll leave when I get ready and not one minute before."

Grabbing my carbine and operating a shell into the chamber pointed it right at the goat's head and said, "Lowe. I don't feel like having you around. Now get that goat out of here or I'll shoot it."

Lowe left but I knew him well enough to know that he would be holding a grudge.

At 4:30, I told Jess Reitmeyer, "Go see if the men have made as much progress as yesterday. If they have they can go to the river for a bath."

"Aren't you going with us?"

"No, I don't feel like going but if the others have earned a bath they better go get it."

The next day, our third in the "Rest Camp", I felt a little better. While I didn't feel well enough to work, I did get around to see what was progressing. Again the work was well enough along that we could go to the river for a bath.

The fourth day we finished getting our equipment ready but it took the entire day. There wasn't enough time for any recreation except our evening bath in the river.

The morning of the fifth day we took down our tents and folded them and the cots and turned them into supply. We spent the forenoon loading our vehicles. Early afternoon we went to the beach and boarded an LST (Landing Ship, Tank) which would be our home for the next few days until we would make the landing on Panay.

We left Lingayen still not knowing if rest camps were real or just a myth. In fact I never did meet anyone who claimed to have been in a rest and recreation camp.

The few days on board the LST before we made the Panay landing gave me a chance to fully recover from the malaria attack.

One of the blessings of youth is that a few days rest will enable one to fully recover from an illness or other ordeal.

On March 18, 1945 the 40th Division minus the 108th Infantry landed at Tigbauan, Panay. The 40th Recon went in with the first wave against a lightly defended beach.

CHAPTER 67

Routing The Japanese At Pavia

The 40th Division had just two infantry regiments for the Panay invasion as the 108th had taken the biggest losses on Luzon. Some their men had been transferred to the 160th and 185th leaving the 108th about 600 men to go to Leyte for replacements and reorganization.

The Recon reconnoitered most of the lowlands of Panay the first two days and it was determined that the main Japanese force was in Iloilo with company size forces dug in at several other locations.

"Take Santa Barbara Airport," was the order given the 40th Recon for the morning of March 20.

One of the infantry regiments along with a large force of Filipino guerrillas had the Japanese positions in Iloilo surrounded with what they called a "Ring of Steel". The other regiment was still in a position around the landing beach at Tigbauan.

Our three reconnaissance platoons were widely separated with the first platoon fifty miles away on the other side of the island. The captain's section had gone into bivouac with the second platoon about five miles from Santa Barbara. The third platoon was ten miles away and nearly out of gasoline. Lt. Rothenberger, liaison officer, arrived with another M-8 and a halftrack loaded with gasoline drums, for the third platoon, and went into bivouac with the second.

Captain Robinson made the plans with two second platoon teams, two M-8s and four jeeps, going to Santa Barbara to start engaging the Japanese. The other second platoon team would join the captain's section to escort the gasoline supplies to the third platoon. After the gasoline delivery we would go help the men at Santa Barbara. The first platoon would join but were not expected until early afternoon.

Jess Reitmeyer had been complaining that he never had been in the turret during a fire fight so I said, "Jess, it is certain that we will have a fire fight today so would you like to ride in the turret?"

"I thought you would never ask."

Our force consisted of three M-8s, three jeeps and the halftrack which mounted a fifty caliber machinegun. There was a total of 22 men.

We had gone about three miles and were nearing Pavia when Sgt. Ray Greenan who was in the point M-8 called back, "We have run into a regiment of Japanese."

We were on a narrow road with deep ditches on both sides so that there was no chance that we could turn and run. Captain Robinson quickly ordered, "Close up on the point and form for defense."

Reitmeyer was getting his chance to fire the turret guns as the three M-8s and the halftrack's fifty caliber machine gun would have to hold the charging Japanese back so that the jeep crews could dismount and fight from the ditch beside the road.

The deadly canister, machine gun fire and soon, the tommygun, machine gun and rifle fire from the dismounted jeep crews stopped the Japanese charge dropping many of them in their tracks. The Japanese soon learned to respect the canister and stayed back out of its range and started to pour fire from their rifles and machine-guns into our position.

Meanwhile I'd been busy sending messages to our liaison team at division HQ and to our other platoons. While waiting for some answers I glanced over at Ack Ack Anderson, the driver, and said, "I feel a lot more comfortable on the turret guns in these situations."

"I know what you mean. We do get a shot with our carbines once in a while but mostly we just sit."

We soon got an answer from liaison saying, "You have to be mistaken about the number of Japanese as there is a ring of steel around those in Iloilo and no other group on the island is nearly that big."

The first platoon was having a fire fight of their own. They were trying to get disengaged but there was no telling when they would arrive. The short handed second platoon was already engaging the Japanese at Santa Barbara. The third platoon was about six miles away and ready, even eager, to join the fight but they were so low on gas that the captain told them to hold their position.

The Japanese had us surrounded and we told liaison that it still looked like a regiment. We asked for reinforcements of tanks, infantry or anything else division could send. Again the reply, "There can't be that many Japanese at Pavia as the only unit that big is trapped in Iloilo."

I couldn't help but wonder if we weren't destined to join such immortals as the Spartans at Thermopylae, the Texans at the Alamo, and General Custer's cavalry at the Little Big Horn as the few who died fighting against impossible odds.

It was high noon when Captain Robinson called Lt. Davenport of the third platoon and said, "Rip, the only way you are going to get your gas is to come after it. Try to outflank the Nips and come into our position from the rear as there appears to be fewer Nips there."

The third platoon had just started when they ran into a patrol and we received the message, "We encountered a Nip patrol. The result is 27 dead Japanese and now we'll come on over and take care of your opposition."

The captain said, "Keep coming we are low on ammunition."

Lt. Davenport called on the troop radio saying, "We are at the edge

of Pavia and we'll come straight through."

As the captain reached for the microphone to tell him to try to outflank the Japanese as originally planned we heard the sound of heavy firing coming from the other side of the village. The third platoon drove right through the heaviest concentration of Japanese with all guns blazing. Some, of the jeep drivers managed to fire their tommyguns while steering their jeep with one hand. Johnny Stapleton had more gas in his jeep than the others and made several passes through the Nip positions and stopped only when he had expended all of his ammunition.

As the third platoon pulled up beside us, across the ditch, we got a message from liaison which read, "Pull back as some A-20s are going to make an airstrike."

Fortunately for us the strike never materialized. We were not able to pull back and then we knew that those flyboys just couldn't tell friend from foe.

With the help of the third platoon we started to get the upper hand with the Japanese breaking up into small groups and heading for the mountains. We got another message from HQ. "We have just learned that the Japanese broke through our lines at Iloilo last night. Don't let any of them get away."

The number of Japanese we faced that day has been estimated as low as 800 and as high as 3000. Our men who were trained and accustomed, to estimate numbers called it a regiment which would be closer to the 3,000. The number of Japanese surrendering at the end of the war would also indicate that the number was closer to 3,000.

Nine hours had elapsed since the fight started when we left Pavia and dashed to Santa Barbara to help the twenty men fighting there. However, we were too late as they had completely annihilated the force and were making a body count. Since we hadn't made a body count at Pavia and the first platoon hadn't made one we got credit for the 92 dead Japanese at Santa Barbara and the 27 the third platoon had eliminated on their first encounter. Unbelievable as it sounds, we did not lose a man in any of the four battles.

CHAPTER 68

Yes, We Have Bananas

The 40th Recon had become accustomed to working and fighting on short rations but it was on Panay that the quartermaster hit a new low in providing food for the fighters.

We went into the landing beach with just one day's supply of C rations and we were not issued any more during our ten day stay on the island.

We soon learned that the Filipinos had a surplus of bananas and since we would nearly always be the first of the invading Americans they would see they really loaded us up with the delicious fruit.

There was a variety of bananas. We would be given yellow ones much like those from Latin America but smaller. There was a red variety that was delicious if eaten when it had just ripened but would develop crystals when overripe. The slender green bananas were the best but we had to depend on the Filipinos to tell us if they were ripe. To our untrained eyes ripe ones looked exactly like green ones.

In addition to those three varieties there were several kinds of plantains or cooking bananas. They were less sweet and more starchy than bananas and not having time to cook them we devoured them raw.

After the rout of the main Japanese force at Pavia and the elimination of the garrison at Santa Barbara the only fighting that remained was patrol activity.

Cowboy Walt David and Russ Nunes were out on a patrol and saw about a dozen Japanese with Nunes saying, "Let's take them."

They did take the Japanese but Nunes had his leg wounded so severely that Cowboy had to carry him back. Nunes was evacuated to Stateside. He did have a portion of the leg amputated.

With the Japanese all retreating to the mountains on the south side of the island one of our infantry battalions and the Filipino guerrillas were left to contain them.

The last two days we set up a command post in Iloilo but had little time to take advantage of working from a stationary C.P. as we had to get ready for yet another amphibious landing. That would be an overnight run on LSTs over to Negros.

CHAPTER 69

Battle At Atipulan

On March 28, 1945 the 40th Division landed at Pulupandan, Negros with the recon going in with the first waves.

The first two days we reconnoitered the northwest part of Negros around Silay and Bacalod and south to LaCarlota and Pontevedra. We lost two of our M-8s and two men during those two days.

On March 30 we were given an assault mission on a company of Japanese entrenched in a three or four acre grove of trees near Atipulan. We arrived there early in the morning with a hundred men of our troop and thirty Filipino guerrillas.

First there would be an airstrike to soften up those entrenched Japanese. We were skeptical of the airstrike as we knew that the flyboys couldn't tell friend from foe and they couldn't tell the real target from some worthless object.

Each vehicle carried three orange fluorescent panels each three by ten feet. Each platoon was given the task of making, a huge arrow with their panels pointing to the Japanese positions from three sides. When the arrows were complete one of the lieutenants reported to the captain saying, "Any idiot can see the target the way we have it marked."

My job was to tune one of our radios to Air Control's channel and do the communicating. I would not be talking to the strike force but to their Air Control and they would relay the information.

With the target marked, I called Air Control and told them, "We have the target so well marked that there just isn't any way that they can miss it."

Five A-20s came and started to make their bomb runs on a grove of trees a half-mile beyond our target. Immediately, I called Air Control,

"Your planes are way off target."

"They just told us they are making bomb runs on the target."

"That is not our target."

"They said they were right on target."

"That is not the right target and they are just wasting bombs."

"What do you mean by saying it's not the target?"

"There is no damn way that I can make it plainer. They are at least a half-mile off the well marked target."

By the time I finally convinced Air Control that the planes were not on target they had finished their bomb runs and headed for home to report their successful mission.

Air Control said they had two more A-20: in the air and would send

then. Those two planes came and dropped eight bombs on the target but seven of them were duds. The pilots did make several runs strafing the Japanese with their fifty caliber machineguns. The Japanese were well entrenched and those machinegun bullets just were not going to harm them. Calling Air Control I reported, "Those two planes hit the target with eight bombs but seven of them failed to explode."

"That's all right they may explode at any time as they sometimes behave like that."

"Thanks, I'm sure that will be a great comfort to us as we go through that grove."

We wouldn't get, and didn't want, any more help from the air force and there wasn't any artillery available so we would have to take the grove with what we had.

We pulled our M-8s around to the side so the gunners could stay in them and support the dismounted men as they cleaned the Japanese out. It was a tactic we had used many times. We would keep the Japanese pinned down with fire from the M-8 turrets while the dismounted men used grenades and tommyguns to eliminate the Japanese.

The men started to dash into the grove but they ran in at such an angle that they were in the line of fire for me and all of the other gunners so that we had to hold our fire.

The leading four were Brady Fields, Tony Quintana, Ronald Fredrickson and Whitey Lowe. They hadn't gone far into the grove when the Japanese opened fire with all four falling at once. The men behind hesitated for a second and then Grady bent over and ran low toward the fallen four with three other men following. By keeping low they were under the Japanese fire and each grabbed one of the men by the collar and pulled them back out of the grove. Three of them were badly wounded and would die from those wounds. The fourth man, Lowe, was dead with just one bullet hitting him and going through his head just above the ears.

Lowe was carried over to our M-8 and laid face up on the grass. Tears trickled down the faces of many of those hardened veterans as they looked at their dead comrade. Lowe had been difficult to live with but he had been a first class fighter always the first to volunteer for a dangerous mission. The captain's voice sounded far away as he said, "Put his body in a mattress cover and load it in his own jeep."

We still had to go through that grove and the men who had been in far enough to see reported that the Japanese were dug in with cave-like trenches that had small openings to fire through. Those would be difficult targets for grenades.

A halftrack with a load of ammunition arrived. The ammunition

included a good supply of grenades and canister. Normally we had such a short supply of canister that we had to reserve it for Banzai attacks but that day we got an abundant supply.

The M-8's and the half-track would go through with the dismounted men following. Where the trees were too thick for the vehicles they would be mowed down by machinegun and canister fire.

Boxes of grenades were loaded on the backs of the M-8s where they would be available to the men in the turrets and the men behind the vehicles. There wouldn't be a wild rush into the grove for the second assault.

Slowly the M-8s started through blasting out a path with the turret guns. If the men in the turrets saw an opening they would toss in a grenade or shoot a high-explosive round into it. The Japanese they missed were taken care of by the men on foot.

I was in one of the three M-8s held back to watch the rear and flanks as the Japanese had a habit of hiding and then popping up to shoot at our men from the rear. They would also come around the flanks to attack our rear. That day the Japanese who survived the onslaught remained very quiet.

By the time our men had gone through the grove it was nearly sundown with the destruction looking complete. There were five Japanese prisoners who would have to strip off all of their clothes as that was the only safe way to handle them. They would often have grenades strapped under their armpits or between their legs and were fanatic enough to blow themselves up if they could take an American with them. So we had picked up the Filipino trick of making them strip to their birthday suits.

After the battle we left the site and returned to a bivouac area near Bacalod.

Next morning we had orders to go back to the grove and make a dead body count. Filipinos told us that 17 Japanese many of them badly wounded had left the area and headed toward Fabrica. The body count was 114 dead Japanese and how many others were forever buried in those caves will never be known.

CHAPTER 70

Fabrica

From March 30 until April 7 we were kept busy on a number of recon missions. On April 2 the Silay, Alicante, and Malaga airstrips were reconnoitered. The next day we reached Victorias and Maniplas on the north coast.

On April 7 we were given the task of seizing the lumber mill town of Fabrica. West of Fabrica the land sloped gradually to the coast. East there was a sharp drop into a beautiful valley. East of the valley was the mountain range.

We had orders to annihilate or capture all of the Japanese as those escaping would head for the mountains and dig in where they would extract a terrible toll from the American and Filipino forces that would have to dig then out.

We approached Fabrica as noiselessly as possible and tried to surround the Japanese. They had a perimeter about 400 yards square and we tried to enclose it with about 115 men in M-8s, halftracks and jeeps so our encircling force was mighty thin. With our force so thin much of the area wasn't well covered. In addition to our thin lines we were further handicapped by the fact that the Japanese had started to evacuate Fabrica when we arrived. The 17 survivors from Atipuluan had arrived a few days before and told the garrison what happened to those who tried to stand and fight those devils in armored cars.

As we closed in the Japanese still remaining started to depart at full speed. With our line so thin and the trees handicapping our gunners and giving cover to the fleeing Japanese most of them made it through to the temporary safety in the mountains.

The Japanese left one prisoner behind. He was oriental and could have been Filipino, Chinese, Korean or Japanese. He was tethered in the middle of a chicken pen without any protection from the broiling sun. The man was so emaciated that all that remained was skin and bones. His talk amounted to a few incoherent words. Captain Robinson gave the order, "Load him in a jeep and take him back to division headquarters as they might want him."

A number of Filipino guerrillas and Europeans, as they called all Caucasians, came in to meet us soon after our arrival. I paid little attention to them as we had seen a large number come in during our three months of combat in the Philippines. In 1955 I met Father James Gallagher at Coos Bay, Oregon who was one of those coming in that day.

The infantry had advanced to the Japanese main line of resistance in

the mountains and it was evident that there would be another tough uphill battle. The 108th Infantry had retrained on Leyte and then gone to Mindanao but had been replaced in the 40th by the 503rd Parachute Regiment. The Japanese force was estimated at 32,500.

A tank company had been attached to the division so that the recon wouldn't have to be used so much for armor. Most of our missions would be by platoon or smaller patrols. The general ordered the recon to set up a permanent command post at Fabrica and work from there. For the first time since landing at Lingayen in January we would be working from a fixed base.

My primary job would be to keep the communications between the C.P. and the patrols and back to our liaison team at Division HQ. Ray Voight and Hank Raymond who were the radio operators for Lt. Olsen, executive officer, had been taking care of the rapidly moving C.P. communications and those two along with Jess Reitmeyer would be with me most of the time at the C.P.

When one of us did have to go out with a patrol we were able to get an operator from one of the recon platoons. My work day would never less than 18 hours but I wasn't going to knock it especially as long, as I didn't have to go on many missions.

The two M-8s we had lost were replaced by an M-20 and a halftrack. The M-20 was like an M-8 except without a turret so we sent it with the liaison team as a turret was the last thing they needed. The halftrack we kept at the C.P. and it did provide more working space than an M-8.

While we were getting organized at Fabrica the patrols started to work into the mountains. Cowboy David was a machinegunner in one of the jeeps. He had procured a jug of nipa wine which he carried along on the patrol. Occasionally, Cowboy would sample the nipa to see if it had spoiled. After all there is no use of carrying a part of a jug of spoiled wine.

The patrol drove their jeeps right into a bigger patrol of Japanese with Cowboy sitting in the back seat of the jeep reporting the progress on the radio. Cowboy gave the location of the patrol and then added, "All of the others have dismounted and are fighting the Nips from the ditch. That's exactly where I'd be if I had any sense."

It was at that moment that a Japanese bullet hit the radio antenna and that's all we heard from Cowboy that day. For his bravery he was awarded a bronze star. The order read in part, "David's action in staying on the radio and reporting the position of the beleaguered patrol enabled the troop to send some armored cars to the scene to extricate the patrol.

We started to have problems with men suffering from "Combat

Fatigue" and they would have to be taken out of combat and in some cases sent to the hospital. Since the first of the year we had been pushed far beyond the normal limits of human endurance. Besides the extreme weariness they had been through much heavy fire, heard many whistling bullets and felt the concussions of numerous bombs and artillery shells. Then there was the bloodletting which sometimes came in such proportions that it would be sickening. Our troop was credited with killing more than 300 Japanese when we were relieved about 21 June. However, that was the count not the kill. My own estimation is that we counted about ten percent of those killed. It is probable that the Japanese dropped in the charges at Bamban and Pavia would have more than triple that number had they been counted. Then there was the tank led charge that the 1st platoon stopped at Lingayen. On the trip across the Balinao Peninsula and again in the Zambales Mts. few had been counted. Hit and run missions just did not allow time to stop and make dead body counts. We had more missions like that on Panay and Negros besides the long range firing we engaged in from time to time.

In April with the war in Europe apparently nearing an end the army came out with the 85 point rotation system. Even though I had 96 points I did not get my hopes up for a quick return to the States.

During April, May and June we got a quota of one man per month with Ben White, Gene Brunstetter and 1st Sgt. Alex MacKenzie being the three selected.

Our troop had received several commendations from the generals commanding the Sixth and Eighth Armies and it was being rumored that we had been recommended to the President of the United States for a unit citation.

Bruce Moore and Sam Schwartz the operators with the liaison team became more and more uncooperative. One day they gave one of the new replacement operators a hard time. I told Captain Robinson that I wanted a jeep to go in and talk to them.

He told me, "We can't spare a jeep for that so why don't you just send them a message?"

Hiram Wellman and Ray Voight were both with the radio when I returned and Voight asked, "Did you get the jeep?"

"No, the captain said to send them a message. If it wasn't so much work I'd use the division field code and send them a long one."

"That's a good idea and I'll help," Voight told me.

"Count on me for help," Wellman chimed in.

I sat down and wrote a long list of their transgressions the most flagrant one being their taking a long message pertaining to the operations

at Dumaguete, on the southeast coast, to the division message center to have it encoded. They knew that division was using a different key from ours but took it anyway. That had caused Jess Reitmeyer and me to work through an entire night to get the matter straight and had put one of our platoons in extreme peril.

After listing their many sins, I mentioned that they were both with liaison because they hadn't been able to cut the mustard in the recon platoons. I wound up the message by saying that I would tolerate no more of their monkey business.

The division field code was unwieldy for an administrative type message as many of the words had to be spelled out with a four letter code group representing each letter.

The message served its purpose as those two were the most polite of radio operators for the rest of our stay on Negros.

We did start getting better rations and we were still getting bananas from the Filipinos. With the fixed C.P. we could let the Filipino women do our laundry. Their method of washing clothes was usually by taking them to the river, laying them on flat rocks and then beating them with a paddle. They did get them to look clean with that method.

Combat had become a way of life with the men of the recon and it was difficult to remember any other life. Everything before Luzon seemed so long ago and far away that it was almost as if it had been a dream. When armies are in combat for extended periods it begins to seem like the entire world is there can the line fighting either for or against them. The more minor battle also become dim memories with the major battles being the ones remembered longer.

It was about mid-June when we left Fabrica and went into bivouac near Silay where we would await transportation back to Panay.

CHAPTER 71

Return To Panay

By June 22 we were back on Panay and assigned to a bivouac area where we would get replacements and train for the big November invasion. We were assured that it would be the biggest invasion ever and would be bigger than Leyte, Luzon and Okinawa combined.

We were not told the plans at the time but the 40th Division was scheduled to land on several small islands off the Southwest coast of Kyushu on Oct. 27 with the main landings to follow on the mainland of Kyushu on Nov. 1, 1945.

Captain Robinson called me in and said, "Sergeant, we did get by despite our shortage of radio operators but I want the troop to be much better prepared for the next operation. We know by now that we can't depend entirely on getting trained radio operators and we do want two fully trained men in each M-8. We will have at least three months to train and I want you to tell me how much of that time will have to be spent on training to get the operators ready to go out and operate a radio without close supervision."

"Sir, with three months we should have them in radio classes for an absolute minimum of four hours each day. As the situation now stands none of the gunners can operate the long range radios."

"We can get them in the classes and if they don't want to learn they can go to the jeeps and we, will get new turret gunners. Get a list of the equipment that you will need so we can start accumulating the materials."

We were given a wall tent and a pyramid tent to use for radio training. To discourage pilfering, Taylor, the radio technician, would sleep in the wall tent and I would sleep in the pyramid tent which was right behind.

I was suffering with a severe attack of dysentery but Hal Taylor and I worked at setting up the tents and building tables and benches. Our code practice equipment had long since been lost so we would have to get more. Taylor started to make a code practice oscillator with parts that he could scrounge. If necessary we could use the code keys from the M-8 radios.

The three medics set up their tent next door with Taylor saying "We may send them some business if we get some stubborn trainees."

"We won't have to worry about Skilarski as he was evacuated after being shot in both legs back on Luzon." I reminded him.

I started going on sick call with dysentery but the problem was so rife that the medics couldn't do much except dish out some pills. The only ones going to the hospital were those too weak to walk.

We got started with some radio training. We were supposed to get a number of replacements in July and Captain Robinson wanted to get some of them into the radio training program.

We did start to get fresh eggs and meat but the supply was on a hit and miss basis. We started to get better supplies of cigarettes but it was still inadequate. Movies were sometimes available and were just about the only form of evening recreation.

There were always rumors that the 85 point rotation system was really going to be put into practice but for July there was just the token quota of one man. At a man a month it would take many years to rotate all of those eligible.

In the hope of getting on a rotation quota, I started to break Jess Reitmeyer in as my replacement for communications Chief.

In the training situation the Saturday morning inspections once more became standard. One of the orders that came from division HQ was to make shoe racks that would fit on the legs of our canvas cots. Division sent out so many directives on things to make from bamboo that it became a joke with the men using "Bamboo" for a greeting.

We were about fifteen miles inland from Iloilo where we would never even get the slightest hint of a sea breeze. There were no passes to get away from our temporary post.

Finally, on July 26 the long expected replacements arrived. We had waited more than a month for their arrival but they did come in July as promised.

Once more I took my dysentery and stomach problems to the medics. The doctor explained, "You have a nervous stomach which is a common ailment for soldiers too long in combat. You should get over that now that you are not in combat. It is separate from your dysentery and it's just coincidence that you have both at the same time."

That may have been a good explanation but it really didn't make me feel any better.

CHAPTER 72

A Trying Day On Panay

Friday, July 27 we had a lovely, sunny day and for a change there were a number of things for me to be thankful for.

First and foremost there was a strong rumor that we would get a real rotation quota for August. My points were enough to get me on the first real quota.

Another blessing was that the dysentery that had been plaguing me since mid June was easing up and I'd eaten a hearty breakfast with no nausea afterward. The doctor had told me that the nausea was separate from the dysentery but they had been waxing and waning in unison so that I was sure the cause was the same.

On Monday we would start training some of the new men as radio operators even though some trained men were among the replacements.

That day would have to be spent in preparing for Saturday's inspection by the commanding general of the division. We welcomed the opportunity to show-him what a sharp outfit the recon could be.

My day would be full as I'd have to see to the communications, the command section and my turret guns. Handling those three jobs had always represented a real challenge and not many men could do it. The average tenure of my predecessors had been two months and I'd had the jobs for two and a half years: our hardest years.

It was about 10:00 a.m. that I begin to feel a little weak but thought it was normal as the long siege of dysentery had weakened me. A few minutes rest in the shade should refresh me and I could resume work. The rest didn't help and I kept getting weaker and my head started to ache.

At noon I went to the mess tent but my good appetite of the morning was gone and the nausea was back. Back in my tent, I rested for the balance of the noon hour.

After noon I got up and started to work thinking, "Oh, these eternal inspections give me a pain. Why do we have to have so many? With ten million men in the army, why couldn't the recon have a few more so that I wouldn't have to hold down three jobs? How can I last all afternoon? I'll just have to pull myself together as it's childish to feel so weak and nauseated."

Neither my mental nor my physical condition improved as the afternoon wore on with my rest stops becoming more frequent and the splitting headache getting worse.

After what seemed eons of time 5:00 p.m. came and I thought a bath and supper would make me feel better. The bath didn't help and the other

men were telling me that I didn't look well. I went to the mess tent and sat there wondering why I'd expended the energy.

Back in my tent I thought about the letters I'd started to write the previous Sunday and decided to finish them. My mother and grandmother, both widows, liked to hear from me often. Taking the stationary from my musette bag I picked up the letter I'd started to Grandma and thought that I'd better make it more cheerful than my feelings. The letter was among her possessions when she died at the age of 99.

Luz Delecruz, the Filipino laundry girl and her younger sister came with my clean laundry. Besides their pay, I'd gathered up some treats for them. They always liked the treats more than the pay as there was little they could buy after more than three years of war.

Luz wanted to play with a typewriter one of the operators had acquired. Normally I'd enjoy a few minutes conversation with those two charming girls but that evening I was just wishing they would go on with their deliveries and leave me alone.

After the girls left I got back to my letter writing. Why did I have to get the blues every time I wrote letters home? There was no use trying to tell them that I hadn't been home on furlough for four years by my own free will. They knew that the army gave the men a thirty day furlough every year and always asked why I didn't take it.

The terrible feeling of nausea, violent headache and weakness persisted. I'd had two attacks of malaria and both started with chills followed by a burning fever and then profuse perspiration. I didn't even suspect it could be malaria and was wondering what could be wrong.

At 9:00 p.m. I finished my letters and took them to the orderly tent and dropped them into the mailbox. Next I went to the medics' tent. Gilbert "Doc" Royal was on duty and said, "Sit down, you look terrible. Here let's take your temperature."

Looking at the thermometer he said, "One hundred and four degrees and you are going to the hospital."

While Royal went for a jeep I went back to my tent and grabbed my musette bag with my stationary and toilet articles. I saw Jess and told him, "You are in charge as I'm going to the hospital and may be there a couple of days."

CHAPTER 73

The Field Hospital

The jeep driver went into the 37th Field Hospital with me until I was admitted. The hospital was a schoolhouse in Iloilo and my ward was in what had been the gymnasium with my cot in the center.

Soon after my arrival in that huge ward the severe chills started and they told me that it was a much more severe attack of malaria than I'd had before. With the first chill came a preview of what it would be like in that ward. I was far from the nurse's station which at night was attended by a corpsman. There was no way that I could get his attention to ask for more blankets. The chill lasted several hours and was followed by a period of intense burning feeling which was followed by a period of profuse perspiration.

There were two nurses on duty during the day and once a chill came during the day. I did manage to get extra blankets and a little attention that day. However, most of the chills came during the night and I'd just have to suffer them out.

It was Thursday, August 2 when the nurse came through with a corpsman from another ward and said, "This man goes and he will have to have help carrying his bedding."

The corpsman didn't help but insisted that I carry my own mattress, blankets, sheets and pillow to the tent ward that I was being moved into. It took three trips with the last one carrying the mattress extremely difficult. I placed the mattress on the cot and the bottom sheet on and then completely exhausted I flopped down on the partially made bed to rest.

As I was lying there trying to gain enough strength to finish making the bed the corpsman came back and ordered, "Get up we need you to help scrub floors."

"Look, Buster, I'm a bed patient and don't even have bathroom privileges so go find someone else to play house maid."

The corpsman soon returned with a nurse who asked, "Why won't you scrub floors when you are ordered?"

"Miss, I'm a bed patient and I was carried into this hospital because I was too ill to work and even too ill to walk around our camp and take care of myself."

"You can take your choice. Get up and scrub floors or go see the doctor."

"I'll be more than happy to talk to the doctor as I sure haven't seen much of one since coming to the hospital."

Entering what passed for the doctor's office he asked, "Why won't

you help scrub floors?"

"Sir, I'm too ill to work or I wouldn't be in the hospital."

"Haven't you been in the army long enough to know that you should obey orders?"

"Sir, that's lawful orders and I don't consider this as such."

"Why don't you just cooperate and try to help?"

"Sir, I'm not going to scrub floors as I'm too ill. You can send me back to duty if you think that I'm well enough to work."

"You are not well enough to return to duty."

"Then I'm not well enough to scrub floors."

"You could give it a try."

"Sir, if you think I'm well enough to scrub floors just send me back to duty."

"Your chart doesn't indicate that you are ready for duty."

"Then I'm not ready to scrub floors. You can send me to New Guinea, Stateside, or where ever it is that you send patients who refuse to scrub floors."

The doctor saw that we were at an impasse and thought that he had to back his nurse and corpsman and sent me back to duty.

Back at the troop, two men carried my cot back to my tent and set it up for me. I didn't do much except lie on the cot.

It was late the next afternoon when two medics, Royal and Grayphner, came over to my tent with a thermometer and insisted on taking my temperature. Royal looked at the thermometer and said, "You have a fever of more than one-hundred-four degrees so we will have to send you to the hospital again."

"No. I just won't go back to that hospital again as I'm better off here. You can do more for me than those boobs at the hospital and besides here I won't have to work."

They left but gave Corporal Harold Woefel instructions to watch me. He came every half hour and about 11:00 p.m. said, "I'm bringing a jeep to take you to the hospital. You can sit in the front or we can tie you in the back but you are going."

CHAPTER 74

Back To The Field Hospital

It was midnight when the driver and swamper carried me back into the admitting office of the 37th Field Hospital. The swamper had hold of my shoulders and the driver was between my legs and held one in each hand.

There was just one nurse on duty in that 500 patient hospital at night and she called for two corpsman to bring a litter which I was laid on. Looking up at the nurse who was standing over me I told her, "I don't want to go back into your hospital as I was here and was sent back to duty because I felt too ill to get up and scrub floors."

"I'm sorry but we'll try to take better care of you this time."

After checking me in she turned to the corpsmen saying, "There is an empty bed in ward one so you can take him there and keep him in bed. Use restraints if that is necessary."

The nurse soon arrived at my bedside with the doctor and my chart for the previous week. After taking my temperature and looking at the chart the doctor asked, "Have you been eating all right?"

"I haven't been eating much and that little bit hasn't been staying down. I have been able to drink a little water."

Turning to the nurse the doctor ordered, "Start atabrine by injection and give him alcohol sponges every half hour. If he can drink water we can hold the I.V.s until morning."

Art Allgsandrini of the 40th Recon was in that ward. It was from Art and another patient that I'd later be with on the ship ride back to the States that I'd learn a lot about the events of the next two weeks. Much of the time I'd be in convulsions or delirious and oblivious of the happenings around me.

I've always wondered if I would have been spared the ordeals of the next few weeks and the continual inconvenience of having to sit on scar tissue if I'd been taken into a good ward instead of the Lower Slobbovia end of the hospital the first time I was admitted.

The care in ward one was excellent. When I'd chill there would be extra blankets and when I'd burn the icy feeling alcohol sponges would come.

There was a day nurse in each ward and we had a lovely young brunette who stood about five feet nothing. A taller and equally lovely brown haired nurse came in to help with the more critical patients. Those were the two nurses who would provide care for me during my most critical days. I must have tried their patience with my delirious raving but

I never heard a cross word from either one of them.

The big doses of atabrine continued to be administered by injection with two big 20cc syringes every four hours. Glucose and liquids were given by I.V.s as I couldn't take anything by mouth except small sips of water.

My memory of those days is hazy but I do remember the two nurses and some of the corpsmen. Besides Allesandrini, the only patient I remember was a big black man named Jones who occupied the bed next to me. The two of us were the most critical patients and were kept next to the nurses' station.

When I heard the men talking about the atomic bomb I thought it was one more of the nightmares I'd been having.

It was about mid-August when the doctor came and told me, "You have shown some improvement so we are going to release you from the hospital at 7:00 p.m. so you can go back to the States as part of the August rotation quota from your unit. You still have a fever but it is below 103 degrees so you should be able to make it onto the ship. Your captain says they will arrange to have somebody carry your baggage there will be a sick bay on the ship where you can get as good treatment as you are getting here. You can go to the sick bay as soon as you get out to sea."

The doctor made it sound so easy that I didn't want to tell him that I didn't feel up to leaving, not even for Stateside.

Just before she went off shift the day nurse came with two bottles of atabrine and told me, "Take two every four hours. Now you have to be real careful or that high fever will come back. I'm happy that you are going to return to your family and friends after all of these years. You have the most serious case of malaria that I've seen so do keep taking the atabrine and be sure to go to the ship's sick bay."

Back at the troop I was provided a cot and bedding but it was in a tent with the recent arrivals from Stateside so they were all strangers to me. It was Elmer Niemela who set up my cot for me and said, "I'm sergeant of the guard tonight and will try to look in on you often."

About all I remember about the rest of the night is Elmer coming into the tent and carrying me out to a jeep and saying, "Sorry but you have to go back to the hospital."

CHAPTER 75

The Third Time And Evacuation

It was about 2:00 a.m. when I was carried back into the 37th Field Hospital for the third time in about three weeks. I recognized the big blond nurse on duty as the one who had told the corpsman to get help in carrying my bedding when I had been moved to a new ward the first time in the hospital. I told her, "I'd like to go back to ward one."

"We'll see if there is a bed available."

After being checked in two corpsmen put me on a litter and carried me back to the same bed I'd vacated seven hours earlier. The nurse soon arrived with the doctor. After a brief examination the doctor ordered, "Two 20 cc syringes of atabrine solution in the buttocks every four hours. Alcohol sponges every half hour to help keep the fever down. Intravenous injections of glucose and saline solutions, one in each arm."

When the young brunette nurse came in the morning to start her twelve hour shift the night nurse was there to go over my chart with her. She looked surprised when she saw the name on the chart and hurried over to my bed. Her hand felt cold on my hot forehead and with her eyes brim full of tears she said, "You're back. My, what a terrible time you've had."

Since I was racked with the raging fever and convulsed by the terrible chills there was no choice but to continue the torturous treatment. Jones was still having hemorrhages and, still occupied the bed next to me where the nurse could watch us constantly even as she worked with her charts.

Captain Robinson came in that first morning saying, "It looks like it was a mistake to try to get you on that ship but I did want to see you go with the rest of the older men in the troop. You have nothing to worry about as the doctor assures me that you will be evacuated to the States by air in just a few days. The other news I have is that our troop's Presidential Citation is now a reality just like I thought it would be."

Once more the days became a blur and I didn't know that I was ranting and raving much of the time until a month later.

As the nurse would go off duty in the evening she would always instruct the night corpsman, "Those two men need constant attention as one is hemorrhaging and the other may become delirious. Now don't leave the ward unattended, not even for a little bit."

The corpsman would say, "Yes Ma'am" and then disappear until about midnight.

One night, soon after the nurse left, the corpsman did his usual disappearing act. My condition started to get worse and some time later

another patient, himself seriously ill, went to drag the corpsman from his poker game. When he came back to the ward he took my temperature and announced, "You have one hell of a fever."

"I know that now why don't you get the doctor or nurse?"

The corpsman was standing there and just seemed to fade away. My next memory is awakening and looking up at the stars and wondering where I could be. It seemed like I had been floating on water and going away from some orange lights and approaching some radiant white light. With my mind finally clearing, I realized that I was on a canvas cot that was on something much more solid than water. I tried to move but was strapped tightly to the cot and the ever present I.V.s were being administered in each arm.

Where could I be? It seemed that I was alone some place, but where? Finally, I noticed someone stirring around and asked, "Where are we?"

A man came over and lifted the mosquito net and I recognized him as one of the day corpsmen who had been called back to duty. He just stood there briefly and then asked, "Are you really talking?"

"Yes, and I want to know what's going on?"

"We are just outside the hospital on what used to be an unloading platform. If you are going to be all right I'll go get some help to carry you back into the ward."

Several times during the night the day nurses or corpsmen had returned from their much needed rest to work on me but that is the only time I remember being taken out of the ward.

The talk those days was of the atomic bombs that had been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and of a possible Japanese surrender. Maybe we wouldn't have to make that November invasion.

After the night on the unloading dock my condition started to improve and after a couple of days I started taking liquids by mouth. That was the day that the doctor came and said, "Tomorrow morning we are putting you on the evacuation plane to Leyte which is the first leg of your trip back to Letterman General Hospital near San Francisco."

CHAPTER 76

Evacuation By Plane, WWII Style

Nearly everyone has looked forward to their first plane ride with some kind of emotion such as anticipation or aversion but I was far too ill to give it any thought.

Long before daylight the night nurse and two corpsmen came with two bottles of I.V. solutions. I told them, "I went on a liquid diet yesterday."

The nurse answered, "Yes, we know but we have to get you well fortified for the plane ride. We'll use large needles so it will run in fast. One bottle is glucose and the other is a saline and quinine solution."

The nurse had to search for places to insert the needles as both of my arms were sore from numerous injections. When the containers were empty the two corpsmen returned and each was carrying one of those huge 20 CC syringes of atabrine solution. I asked, "How come I'm to get injected with atabrine again if you just ran a bottle of quinine solution into my arm?"

"Doctor's orders."

They rolled me over onto my stomach and pulled down my pajama pants with one saying, "There's no use of looking for a place that isn't sore so let's each inject at the count of three."

It was a silent count that I didn't hear and as they emptied the syringes the nurse returned and handed each a smaller syringe saying, "He gets one of these in each upper arm."

My upper arms were both sore from repeated injections so once again they went through their ritual. One of the syringes was morphine and I didn't ask, and wasn't told what the other was.

Two more corpsmen came with a litter and as the first two still held my arms they had me in a straight jacket before I realized what they were doing. I yelled, "What's the idea of that?"

One answered, "You've been delirious much of the time so that we have to put that on before they will accept you on the plane."

The corpsmen then proceeded to strap me so tightly to the litter that only my head could move. There was no way to scratch an itchy nose.

Two of the corpsmen carried the litter outside and put it down to await the arrival of the airport ambulance. Since I was in ward one I was carried out first with those from the other wards following.

As the corpsmen put the litter down I told them, "I sure would like a cigarette."

One of them replied, "We have to keep moving as we have a lot of

patients to carry out."

As they hurried away a nearby soldier dressed in jungle fatigues came over, knelt beside me, produced, lit and managed a cigarette for me. As we smoked we talked of the many islands we'd seen and of the campaigns we'd been through. He was from the 24th Division and was going to be transported back to his unit by ship.

When the young day nurse came on duty she walked right out to me. As she leaned over the tears welled up in her eyes and she said, "I've come to say goodbye."

It was a few minutes before the arrival of the ambulance and those two stayed by my side, the young nurse and the veteran soldier. The nurse was silent but the soldier and I talked of our recent campaigns.

As the ambulance arrived and the corpsmen started to put me aboard the soldier said, "Goodbye and good luck."

The nurse put her hand on my forehead and managed a parting smile. She then hurried back to her ward for she carried the burdens of all of her patients on her young shoulders. Through the trying months to come and on down through the many years I've always remembered the thoughtfulness of those two.

As we approached the airfield the sun was a big red ball in the eastern sky. The beautiful, blonde flight nurse took our charts as we were loaded onto the plane. The litter patients were first and then the walking wounded some with patches over where an eye had been while others had empty sleeves. All of the patients had written instructions on large tags pinned on their chests.

When the plane was airborne the flight nurse looked at my chart and took my temperature and then said, "I'll remove your straps and jacket so you'll have a more comfortable ride. However, we'll have to put them back on before landing on Leyte."

Sleep came before I could introduce myself to any of the others. My next recollection is of the nurse shaking me awake and saying, "We are approaching the Leyte landing so we'll have to put your straps and jacket back on you."

My first reaction was to fight but she was so charming that I didn't want to give her any trouble.

CHAPTER 77

The 133rd General Hospital

As with so much of the month of August, 1945 there is no recall of the ambulance ride from the airfield to the 133rd General Hospital near Tacloban.

The ward I was taken to was a small one with about 25 patients most of them recovering from the shock condition known as "Battle Fatigue." All of those patients were ambulatory. I was assigned the bed nearest the nurse's station.

Three doctors accompanied by a stately blonde nurse came to examine me. After the examination they withdraw for a conference and a look at my chart. One doctor came back and told me, "You are just not strong enough to continue to San Francisco at this time so we will keep you here a few days until you get a little stronger."

"Sir, it doesn't take any strength to lie on a stretcher. "

"We will keep you here until we know that you are strong enough for the long ride."

As soon as she could the nurse returned saying, "I hope the doctor didn't alarm you by telling you that you are not strong enough to continue the trip. According to your chart you are much improved. You are fortunate that you were brought to our ward as we have the best staff in the hospital. We can give you the intensive care that you need and will have you eating solid food and taking your medication by mouth within a week. Now that is a promise."

Late that evening, after the corpsmen had made me ready for the night, the night nurse, a tall woman wearing a raincoat, came in and stood beside my bed. I couldn't see her face in the twilight but she had a pleasant voice as she talked of what I'd been through, of my present condition and my treatment for the next few days. Like the day nurse she promised that I'd be going to a convalescent ward within a week.

My treatment in that ward was the best available. I got a lot of attention from the sedate but efficient nurse, from the corpsmen, the doctors and most of all from the other patients. Those patients who had been through so much themselves showed a lot of compassion for me. Every waking hour one of them was sitting in the chair beside my bed to attend to my every need or want. They kept the flies shooed off me. They worked with me in getting my queasy stomach to where it would accept liquids then soft foods and finally solid foods. When I'd vomit my attendant would say, "Now don't get discouraged. We will just clean up the mess and start over."

After a few days I was even taking the huge doses of atabrine by mouth.

Near the end of my stay in that ward one Americal Division soldier who had fought from Guadalcanal to the Philippines talked to me. "Now that you are in this psycho ward you should take advantage of it and make the doctors think that you are a psycho. Thirteen times I was carried into hospitals and every time the medics patched me up and sent me back to duty. I walked into this hospital under my own power and now I've got my ticket to the States."

"Thanks, that may be good advice but I'm supposed to continue the air evacuation back to the States."

It was a happy day for both the staff and patients when it was decided that I could be moved to one of the huge medical wards. When two corpsmen came with the litter to transport me to the medical ward the nurse looked at me like an artist looking at a masterpiece. No king was ever borne more proudly than those two corpsmen carried me to the medical ward where they triumphantly handed the head nurse my chart. Their badge of achievement was in getting such a critical patient and then getting him to a convalescent ward so soon.

The big tent ward held a hundred patients with four nurses besides the head nurse. The head nurse seldom worked with the patients but she would threaten to take my pajama pants away from me when I tried to get out of bed.

Our end of the ward had two good humored young nurses to brighten it. One was a winsome blonde. The other was a brown haired woman with a few freckles who said, "My name is Shirley Fuller and you can call me Miss Fuller."

"Thanks, it's nice to meet a nurse with a name other than Miss Lieutenant for a change."

I was extremely sore, swollen and inflamed from all of those atabrine injections. Imagine the dilemma of a corpsman when he walked up to a patient who has had twelve injections a day for three weeks as he stands there looking and wondering where he is going to inject without hitting a sore spot.

The first morning I was awakened by an irate female voice saying, "I don't like a patient who exposes himself to the nurse."

The man in the next bed said, "Miss, I just don't think that he can bear to have any cover on his sore behind."

By that time I was aroused enough to know what was going on and said, "Miss Fuller, if you don't like the view you could just drop the mosquito net instead of holding it up."

Miss Fuller left but returned in a few minutes with a wet towel saying, "Here, maybe this wet towel will help put the fire out."

The following mornings, Miss Fuller would always stop with a cheery, "Good morning, and how is your fanny this morning?"

One afternoon when all of the staff appeared to be busy at the other end of the ward I got the idea that a trip to the latrine some 200 feet outside the ward would break the monotony. I had managed my way down the aisle past several beds when Miss Fuller returned from her afternoon break. She walked up to me and demanded, "Just where do you think you are going?"

"Miss, I'm going to walk out to the latrine."

Miss Fuller stood there for a few seconds before clapping her hands and saying, "You just go right ahead. I do so, want to see how you are going to manage when you get outside and don't have these beds to lean on."

I started back to my own bed with the young nurse helping me. After I was back in bed she said, "Now we will tell you when we think that you are ambulatory."

One afternoon a surgeon came in to examine me saying, "That grapefruit sized abscess will have to have surgery."

Two corpsmen came with a litter and moved me to a surgical ward where I was prepped for surgery for the following morning."

The surgical ward had empty beds as it was the last part of August and the battle wounded were no longer coming into the hospital. The head nurse was a brunette with a younger brunette and a slender blonde as her assistants. There was also a Filipino girl named Maria but the head nurse told me, "Don't ask Maria for anything as the nurses and corpsmen take care of the more serious patients."

It was almost noon the next day when I recovered from the anesthetic and I was still groggy when the corpsman brought me a cup of dehydrated milk for dinner. Just then a chaplain happened to walk past and I said, "There is the man that I should see."

The chaplain asked, "What is it that you want?"

"I haven't eaten since noon yesterday and all they bring me is a cup of dehydrated milk."

Looking at the no feeding instructions he said, "I'd bring you a big juicy steak but the corpsman would probably eat it."

Early the next morning the blonde nurse came in with the usual question, "How are we this morning?"

Tired of my long stay in the islands, tired of my long stay in the hospitals, tired of having to lie face down and tired of being the "Butt" of

so many jokes, I answered, "You look fine but I feel really terrible."

"Oh, just cheer up and remember that most of your miseries are now behind you."

"How true."

A Red Cross girl, Peggy, a buxom blonde from Texas, came through the ward each afternoon to visit with the patients and to run errands for them. With that long tube in my incision it looked like I'd be there to keep her company for several weeks.

It wasn't many days before the blonde nurse came in and pulled the drain tube from the incision and put on a fresh bandage. Next she put twelve bottles of atabrine tablets into my musette bag along with written instructions for massive doses. Turning to me she told me, "We have orders to send you back to duty at 1:30 p.m. Each morning you must go to a dispensary for a fresh dressing and a temperature check. I'll send you over to supply with a corpsman so you can get some clothes. At noon you will go to the mess hall with the ambulatory patients. At 1:30 you will go by truck to the casual camp. So just grit your teeth and have faith and determination and you can make it all of the way back to the States this time."

My shoes had survived the several moves but I had nothing else for wearing apparel. Somehow I made it over to supply and was issued herringbone fatigues, underwear, sox and a cap. Just one outfit as I was far too weak to carry baggage.

At the casual camp the first sergeant of the casual company ordered two men to get a cot and set it up for me and said, "You will be here overnight and return to Panay tomorrow afternoon. All 40th Division men have been called back to duty as that division is leaving for occupation duty in Korea."

Having a first sergeant designate others to set up a cot for an enlisted man was practically unheard of in the army so I figured that my condition must have been apparent by my appearance.

The next morning we had fried eggs for breakfast and I ate my two along with a slice of field bread. They tasted so good that I went to the adjacent company and went through their chow line where I was served two more eggs.

CHAPTER 78

Return To Panay

On Sep. 4, right after noon we loaded onto trucks for the ride to the port. It was past mid-afternoon when the 200 men from the 40th Division started to load onto the LCI (Landing Craft, Infantry) for the 20 hour ride to Panay. None of the men were from the recon but I had met a few of them in hospitals, ship rides, training sessions and other places where men from different units would meet.

The noonday sun beat down on us when we disembarked from the LCI and were herded into a semblance of a formation on the Iloilo dock.

The captain in charge ordered, "At ease. I will call the unit and the men who belong to that unit fall out and join that unit.

Looking across the road where the jeeps and drivers were lined up there wasn't any that I recognized and thought that one of the new men must have been sent to pick me up.

The captain called out the units with the men falling out and walking, limping and staggering toward their units. Many of them were still wearing bandages.

There was time to reflect on the treatment accorded combat troops. The 40th Division was leaving for occupation duty in Korea and the order had gone to the hospitals on Leyte to send all 40th Division men back to duty.

The situation was not new to the men as they always complained, bitterly, about having to return to duty as soon as they had enough strength to pull a trigger while the rear echelon troops would stay in the hospital until they were fully recovered and fit for duty.

Nearly eighty companies and batteries were represented with the captain calling them off and then turning to climb into his own jeep.

I looked up and down the almost deserted dock and noticed one other man and recognized him as Bumpy Rhodes, Bumpy a man I'd met as we were boarding the LCI the previous day. Walking over to him I said, "Well, Bumpy, it looks like the 160 Antitank Company is just as anxious for your return as the 40th Recon is for mine."

"They sure didn't send a welcoming committee."

"Let's walk toward downtown Iloilo and see if we can find a telephone."

As we walked I felt the fluid from my incision run down my leg and saturate my sock and run on into my shoe.

We came to a Red Cross shack and went in. I asked the waitress, "Do you have a telephone we can use?"

"Yes, but why don't you have a cup of coffee and a doughnut first?"

"That sounds like a good idea."

As we drank our coffee Bumpy said, "I don't think I'll call my unit just yet. I'll just look around town for someone from my company and if I'm lucky I'll have a few days on the town before I run into someone. If I don't see anyone by the time I'm broke I'll call."

"You might miss the ship to Korea by doing that."

"So what? I'll just find another casual company if that happens. Why don't you do the same?"

"No. I need fresh bandages several times each day. Then, too, I haven't been paid for several months and don't have much money."

On the phone, I got through to the 40th Division and finally to the 40th Recon and hear "Fortieth Cav. Rcn. Troop, Corporal Dumokski speaking. "

"You have that well memorized for a new man."

"Waddya mean; New Man? I've been here for five weeks."

"Oh, that makes you an old timer but I really called to ask for transportation. This is Sgt. Gerrish and I'm at the Iloilo dock and need a ride back to the troop."

"We don't provide transportation so why don't you call the Q.M.?"

"Just send a jeep over to pick me up."

"I just said that we don't provide transportation."

"Look, corporal, I belong to the troop and I'm not about to walk twenty miles to get back there."

"What troop do you belong to?"

The 40th Recon, the only unit in the division called a troop."

"Sorry, but we don't have a Sgt. Derrish on the roster."

"No, it's Gerrish spelled G-e-r-r-i-s-h and it starts with a "G" like in George."

"We don't have a George Derrish either."

"My first name is Paul, I'm Sgt. Paul Gerrish."

"Then how come you said your name was George?"

"The last name begins with "G" like in George."

"We don't have a George Derrish either."

"My first name is Paul, I'm Sgt. Paul Gerrish"

"The how come you said your name was George?"

"The last name begins with a "G" like in George."

"But you told me you were Sgt. Derrish."

"Is Sgt. Knill around?"

"We don't have a Sgt. Knill either."

"Just who is there besides you?"

"Sgt. Brown is in supply."

"Please get Sgt. Brown."

After a few minutes, Cpl. Dumoksi picked up the phone and said, "Sgt. Brown isn't back there but Cpl. Ward said that we never did have a Sgt. Parrish in the troop."

"No, not Derrish or Parrish but Gerrish, G-e-r-r-i-s-h. But let's not get into that again and just who is first Sgt. Now?"

"Sgt. Butte."

"Where is that redhead?"

"How do you know that he has red hair?"

"Why don't you find him and let me talk to him?"

"I don't know where to look." Click click.

On my third try I lucked out and Sgt. Butte was back and told me, "You sound good enough to be right here on this island. Are you calling from San Francisco?"

"I am at the Iloilo port and need a ride back to the troop."

"I know that you were evacuated back to the States by air more than a month ago so please don't try to kid me."

"No. I was short stopped on Leyte and was sent back over here with the casuls. For three hours I've been trying to get a ride back to the troop and I was hoping to get more cooperation from you than from that stupid clerk. My next call is going to be to the commanding general of the division and you can just bet your bottom peso that General Don Meyers will see that I get transportation."

"No, don't call him, I'll send a jeep right now."

Back at the troop, Sgt. Butte told me, "We can't take you to Korea in the condition that you are in."

I'd not only missed the August and September rotation quotas but the one for October had been selected. Captain Robinson entered and said, "We'll either have to get you on the October rotation quota or send you to a convalescent camp."

The October quota was composed mostly of the Fort Riley men who had joined the troop at Burbank, back in April, 1942. Our armorer, Corporal Jim Brown, had been promoted to Tech. Sgt. and was in charge of the rotation men. That was good as I would have been the ranking non-com and just didn't feel up to being in charge.

CHAPTER 79

Return To Leyte

There were about 25 men on the October quota and they included: Sgt. Jim Brown, L'Cainan Evans, Lawrence Grieshop, James "Porky" Hall, Ed McFarland, John Rieber, Bill Reinking, Francis Renillard, Chester Sherwood, Ashton Smith, Wilbur Tucker, Paul "Big" Ward and Hal Woefel.

I joined them in a big wall tent in an area that was semi-isolated from the rest of the troop. We were not so isolated as to escape the Saturday morning inspection with General Meyers reviewing us. When he finished the inspection he came back to the middle of the tent and addressed us. "Men, even though you are about to leave you have not tried to sneak through this inspection unprepared like so many others in the division have been doing. It is easy to see why the 40th Cav. Recon. Troop has been an outstanding unit and why you were awarded the unit citation from the President of the United States....."

On September 13 our group was moved to a new location closer to Iloilo in a camp where we didn't have bathing facilities.

It was about Sept. 20 when we boarded a slow old ship to go to Leyte. With the LCI, which isn't noted for speed, the trip took 20 hours. The "Mud Scow" took four days and four nights. We had no bunks but had to sleep on the weather deck on a catch as catch can basis. There were no mess facilities so we subsisted on cold C rations. That was our first introduction to the new C rations that offered a better variety than the old meat and beans, meat and vegetable hash and the "Stinking-stew" that no one could eat.

We were on Leyte by Sept. 25 and went into a casual camp near Tacloban to await transportation Stateside.

The point system was not being used as we saw many men who had only recently arrived in the islands return to the States while we sat in the camp cursing the War Department.

I still didn't feel strong enough to go on pass and was still going to the dispensary each morning for a fresh bandage on my incision.

When my name would come up for a detail I would go to the commanding officer and tell him my condition and offer to show him the draining incision and that always got me off the detail.

The only diversions were the PX and a Red Cross where we could get a cup of coffee and sometimes a doughnut. Much of our time was spent in playing cards with our old standbys from troop ship day being the favorites.

CHAPTER 80

Return To Stateside

It was Oct. 18, 1945 when we finally left Tacloban, Leyte for the trip to San Francisco. We would go the circle route which would take us through the North Pacific. We all agreed that our ship, Zoella Lykes, was the best troop ship we had ever been on.

In the North Pacific we ran into a violent storm where we had to look up into the sky to see the crests of the waves. The weather was cold and all we had to wear was the suntan uniforms we had been issued before leaving Leyte. We had to wrap in blankets Indian fashion to keep from freezing. The ship lost so much time in the storm that the rations were getting low and the destination was changed to Seattle.

On Nov. 12 we got off the ship in Seattle still wearing our blankets and were loaded into trucks and hustled down the back streets and on out to Fort Lewis. As we were marching into our assigned area we saw Lt. Olsen and some of the other men who had gone to Korea. Even with spending a month in Korea they beat us back by three days.

Since I was the only one from the Recon who was going to be mustered out at Fort Lewis I was separated from my old comrades and sent to the separation center. There I was with a group of men who had spent three to four years in the Pacific. They were from units like the 24th, 25th and 27th Divisions that had been in the Pacific before Pearl Harbor. Others were from the Americal, 32nd, 37th, 40th, 41st and 43rd Division all with long terms in the Pacific.

To those men "Rest and Recreation" was a myth. The 18-month rotation system of 1944 had turned into a bitter joke and the 85-point rotation system had been a cruel hoax. We still had to listen to a number of reenlisting speeches. I remember one very young second lieutenant who was talking about the benefits of an army career. He did all right until he said, "Another benefit in the army is a 30-day furlough every year."

The "Applause" he received from that statement lasted a full ten minutes.

The chow was excellent at the separation center. For the first time in my army days there was milk to drink. We would get steak dinners and all we wanted.

Despite the Royal Carpet treatment if any of those men reenlisted I didn't hear about it.

We were issued new O.D. uniforms with all of the overseas strips and all of the other decorations. Things really hadn't changed as my trousers were way too big and my blouse too small.

We had physical examinations and it was much more difficult for me to pass the one to get out of the army than it had been to pass that entrance examination back in Cheyenne. One doctor suggested that I should spend some time in the hospital but since it wasn't mandatory I chose not to.

It was a happy occasion for me when I left Fort Lewis about 6:30 p.m. on Nov. 16 with my discharge papers in my left shirt pocket which was as near to my heart as I could get them. I remembered the words of the slender blonde nurse on Leyte, "Just grit your teeth and have faith and determination and you can make it all of the way back to the States this time."

Indeed, I had made it all of the way at long last.



Paul Gerrish
Separation Photo, Nov, 1945

Epilogue

After Paul left the Army on November 16th, he must have gone straight to visit the nurse Bessie Bowen, whom he had met in Seattle in 1942. They were married just over a month after he left the Army. I was born in May 1948 as their only child.

I have very few recollections of the first couple of years. I know that they lived in the Remington Court Apartments. My mother attributed my fear of heights to the probable effect of falling off a table when she was changing my diapers.

Sometime after I was born, they bought a fully furnished house on the 300 block of N 138th St., north of Seattle, several blocks north of Playland and Bitter Lake.

My dad attended Seattle University on the GI Bill. I don't know how long that lasted, but he did not finish a degree in Electrical Engineering. However, when I started college, he gave me his old DECI-Log-Log Slide Rule.

The first job I knew at which he worked was a Radio Repair shop. From there, he transitioned to a Federal Job working on ship communications and wiring at the Bremerton Naval Ship Yard. He finally got tired of the long daily commute via ferry from downtown Seattle to Bremerton and the working conditions with the asbestos-laden ship interiors. In the mid-1950s, he started applying for other federal jobs, and around 1955, he was accepted for a job with the Bonneville Power Administration.

When I was in the middle of first grade, we moved to Coos Bay, Oregon, where he worked out of North Bend, Oregon, for that region of the BPA service area, repairing their communications infrastructure. He tired of his supervisor (as did many of his co-workers). In 1962, he transferred to Olympia, Washington, with the BPA and worked there until he was in an automobile accident with a Defense Forces vehicle that was driving unsafely on a lane and half forest service road on his way to a maintenance job on a BPA Microwave/relay tower site on the top of Capitol Peak, not too far North of where he went on the Washington maneuvers with the Army. He received a disability retirement due to that accident from the BPA.

After he retired, he started researching his family genealogy. He attended South Puget Sound Community College, earning an associate degree in Journalism. Working on this degree spurred his interest in writing stories for different publications and writing this volume on his Army Days.

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